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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Changes on the Land:
Ritual, Transformation, and Ecological Restoration

By

Lisa Meekison ©

A Thesis
Submitted To The Faculty Of Graduate Studies And Research In Partial Fulfillment Of
The Requirements For The Degree Of Masters Of Arts

Department of Anthropology

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall, 1995

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Abstract

Ecological restoration is a discipline which is quickly growing in scope and popularity, and thus it is important to decide collectively on a conception of the practice that defines not only what restoration *is*, but what it *could* be. Restorationists assume that since human interference in nature is inevitable, the best recourse is planned and caring intervention in natural systems to attempt reversal, or at least mitigation of ecological damage. Some restorationists, however, also suggest that since environmental problems are largely the result of specific cultural attitudes towards nature, any practice that seeks to undo ecological damage must also address cultural factors. They argue that a further goal of ecological restoration should be to play a part in reshaping our cultural relationship with nature.

Some restoration practitioners have suggested that incorporating ritual and performance into ecological restoration is one way of overtly exploring the nature/culture divide, and thus may have an important part to play in changing North America's cultural construction of nature. Claims for the potential of ritual in restoration have varied from the extreme, such as the belief that it may be possible to create an ecological equivalent of communion and transubstantiation, to the modest, such as the conviction that "giving back" to one's garden fosters a sense of humbleness and respect for the land.

In this thesis, I will argue that ritual and performative activities will be important to the ongoing development of ecological restoration, although I will also note several troubling aspects of their use within the practice. Anthropological theory suggests that ritual and performance create meaning out of experience, spark creative and transformative power, and allow members of a culture to symbolically act out and celebrate their overarching cultural values. I believe all of these qualities of ritual and performance will be necessary if ecological restoration is to achieve its full ecological and cultural potential.

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Chapter One

Changes on the Land: An Introduction

Introduction

This thesis has developed out of my interest in recent writings about the practice of ecological restoration and its potential both to repair damaged ecosystems and to serve as a vehicle for establishing a healthier relationship between people and land, culture and nature. The recent flurry of books, articles, conference papers, and art installations dealing with this topic are likely the result of the sudden optimism restoration has given to many in the face of ecological crisis; at last we have some positive way to respond to the grim reality of environmental degradation. The appeal of ecological restoration appears to extend further: in the various essays and articles studied I have seen broad claims for the potential of ecological restoration to address social and cultural issues related to our (North American culture's) uneasy relationship with nature. These claims include strengthening communities through collective restoration efforts, addressing social justice issues through environmental clean-up and food production, exploring and expanding both our sense of aesthetics and spirituality through creative engagement with nature, and ultimately creating a new environmental paradigm that will allow for a sustained and joyful relationship between our culture and nature.

One of the most frequently invoked words in discussions on this topic is ritual. Championed most fiercely in the writings of William Jordan III, but mentioned in many other articles too, the idea of ritual in restoration has become both a mantra for the way to "reconnect" with the earth, and a spectre to those who fear restoration is coming under the influence of tree-hugging, new-age eccentrics. Rarely is the term used with any sense of coherent definition, however, and as we live in a secular society, the word, misused or otherwise, can create a lot of uneasiness among people who like their ecology "straight".

I propose that ritual and performance could be of considerable importance to the ongoing development of ecological restoration. There are, however, serious issues regarding its use that need clarification and discussion before ritual practice is embraced wholesale by restoration ecologists. This essay, then, is a consideration of the role of ritual and performance in ecological restoration. In particular, I am interested in what hopes people have articulated for use of ritual in restoration, especially the idea that through it we will have a means to modify or even transform our cultural understanding of nature.

The bulk of the research for this thesis has taken place through extensive reading of fairly recent (but still voluminous) articles and books on ecological restoration. Chief among these are the journals *Restoration and Management Notes* and *Restoration Ecology*, and the book *Beyond Preservation*. Because of my perspective from within anthropology, however, I have also tried to read as much applicable anthropological theory as possible, including relevant contributions from ecological and cultural anthropology. I also made a brief trip to Madison, Wisconsin, "ground zero" for ecological restoration in North America, to visit two of the most successful and famous restoration sites: the nature preserve of Aldo Leopold's Sand County, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Arboretum. While in Madison, I interviewed William Jordan III, director of the Arboretum and editor of *Restoration and Management Notes*. One of the further highlights of my time in Wisconsin was the opportunity to stay with Barbara Westfall, a restorationist, teacher and artist who has built a life around restoration, art and community gardening.

In Chapter One of this thesis, I will first define ecological restoration, describing it both as a specific practice, and as a philosophical approach to solving environmental problems. Second, in order to set the background for discussion in the following chapters, I will discuss the historical and cultural context for ecological restoration in North America. This will include a brief overview of some of the philosophical trends that have shaped the North American view of nature, and some discussion of the cultural issues that have arisen as possible consequences of our culture's sense of separation from nature.

In Chapter Two I will present my field report from Madison, Wisconsin, including, as mentioned above, the results of interviews with restoration practitioners Bill Jordan and Barbara Westfall. I will also describe what Westfall's restoration and land-based rituals look and feel like, in order to create a sense of what restoration based rituals really *are*.

In Chapter Three I will discuss anthropological theory relating to the function of ritual in culture. This will include Victor Turner's argument that ritual serves an important role in the redressive stage of social drama, and that ritual and performance are two means of creating *liminality*, transformative energy. I will also discuss Cohen and Myerhoff's comments that ritual can serve as essentially normative function in culture. Finally, I will describe Albert Borgmann's concept of focal things and practices, and attempt to show their relationship to ritual.

In Chapter Four, I will discuss the incorporation of ritual/performance into restoration in detail, focussing on contributions to the discussion by Bill Jordan, Frederick Turner, and Barbara Westfall. I will also consider their arguments in light of the anthropological theory presented in Chapter Three.

Finally, I will make a summary of the thesis in Chapter Five, and discuss how I believe ritual will best be used in the further development of ecological restoration.

Ecological Restoration: Definitions
The view from within and without

The Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) defines restoration as: "...the process of repairing damage caused by humans to the diversity and dynamics of indigenous ecosystems" (SER News, 1994, 3). This definition, adopted as official at the latest SER annual conference in Lansing, Michigan (August, 1994), describes the basics of restoration, but is not as comprehensive as it perhaps could be.[1] A panel devoted to exploring the role of official definitions at the same conference concluded (and had actually recommended) that a proper definition of ecological restoration would also have to include at least a nod to cultural issues surrounding restoration, and perhaps also a description of appropriate goals for restoration. Because restoration is a new and rapidly growing field open to "pushes" in certain directions as it develops, some restorationists advocate collectively deciding on a description of the practice that will help chart not just what restoration is, but what it *could* be:

> Restoration ecology, although a practice with a long history, just now is emerging as a recognized discipline. Making choices will be a critical part of ensuring the best possible future of the discipline (Pickett and Parker: 1994, 75).

And who will be the people making these choices? Currently, ecological restoration is practiced by several tens of thousands of people at thousands of projects across North America. Restorationists have varying degrees of experience; many are trained biologists and ecologists, others are the staff and volunteers who work with them, and others still may be those whose knowledge is self-taught. As restoration grows as a practice and assumes more and more importance as a means of environmental redress, however, the practice will likely continue to move towards increased professionalization. This is manifested in the creation of organizations such as SER, consultancies, increasing government regulatory involvement, and vociferous debate within SER about professional standards and certification. Thus SER is itself in an organization of increasing importance, coming to stand for a practice which has grown exponentially since Aldo Leopold and others first started restoring patches of prairie at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum.

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[1] This definition of ecological restoration is currently under review by the Board of Directors of SER.

Outside the confines of SER, however, within the larger world of environmentalism, ecological restoration is seen not only as a specific task, but also as an alternative to the philosophies of preservation and conservation. According to Frederick Turner:

> Conservation sees nature as a vast resource, physical and spiritual, that must be wisely husbanded so that it may continue to yield a rich harvest for human beings. Preservation sees nature as of intrinsic value, the greater for being untouched by humankind, and seeks to keep it inviolate (Turner: 1994, 35).

Restoration, on the other hand, seeks active human intervention within nature, in order to reverse environmental degradation. There is some tension between the restoration and the preservation/conservation philosophies, but there has been no convincing argument that they are mutually exclusive. Baldwin *et al* suggest that

> Preservation...seems like a good idea where it is both feasible and meaningful, but it is inadequate as a comprehensive solution to our worldwide ecological problems. In the best of circumstances, preservation is applicable only to the limited portion of the earth that has not already been tampered with - and even those areas are menaced by people and states that sense far more acutely an immediate need to use the land rather than to preserve it (Baldwin *et al*: 1994, 5).

In other words, what is most needed is environmental action that includes *both* preservation/conservation where applicable, and restoration where possible. Resolving whether one supports preservation, restoration or both, however, requires coming to terms with how one thinks about human "membership" in nature (*Ibid*., 6). Baldwin *et al* suggest that a preservationist philosophy is one that tends to see humans as "different from, and opposed to nature," and thus it makes sense "to attempt to protect nature, to isolate and preserve portions of nature from human incursion." Restorationists, on the other hand, are more likely to see themselves as members *of* nature, and thus their restorative work is "natural" and may even be "an important part of the human role within nature" (Turner: 1994, 35).

Besides figuring out what counts as ecological restoration through official definitions and/or deciphering its place within environmental philosophy, one can also look at actual projects to determine what appears to count as restoration. The definitions panel at the conference in Lansing spent considerable time doing this, referring to the exercise as applying the "duck" test: if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, is it a duck? Applied to restoration work, one can ask, "if it reverses existing damage to ecosystems, then is it restoration?" Reviewing this question in the restoration literature, one finds myriad "restoration" projects, and approaches to carrying them out. For example, Jonathan Perry describes corporate restoration programs designed more to enhance corporate environmental images and prettify the landscape than with the purpose of halting and reversing environmental damage (Perry: 1994, 145). If some good work has occurred, but much of the restoration is slipshod or incomplete behind the view from the highway, then is it restoration? Further, can it be called restoration if a corporation builds a salt-marsh from scratch in order to demolish one on the site of a proposed shopping mall? (Higgs: 1993, 139). At the opposite extreme, restoration projects may be the result of long-standing community effort which may or may not be conducted under the conscious rubric of "ecological restoration." Freeman House, for example, describes his community's efforts to bring back the salmon run in their local river, but being "only vaguely aware that [they] were engaged in something called environmental restoration" (House: 1992, 61).

While the duck test is very useful in defining the outer limits of what passes for restoration, it is also useful to look at "typical" projects - the kinds that get a lot of attention in journals like *Restoration and Management Notes* - to get a sense of how most people in the practice characterize restoration.

For example, in the Winter 1992 issue of *Restoration and Management Notes*, there appeared a lengthy article about the restoration of the Paradise Meadows in Mount Rainer National Park. This restoration project was initiated because of damage to the sub-alpine meadows caused by legions of hikers who left marked trails and trampled over delicate plants and soils. The restoration effort, as of 1992, included

> the documentation of all human impacts in the Paradise area, the development of a rating system to classify affected areas and to prioritize them for restoration, improved techniques for stabilizing and revegetating severely eroded sites, and the development of a comprehensive restoration plan for the Paradise meadows... [which] ...addresses not only revegetation methods and priorities, but protection of restored sites and prevention of new damage to plant communities (Rochefort & Gibbons: 1992, 120).

The restoration plan also included gathering sociological information, specifically profiles of "non-compliers," hikers who knew they were supposed to stay on marked trails but chose not to (*Ibid.*). The actual work of the project has been carried out by "a seasonal crew of ten working under the direction of Natural Resource Specialist Pam Griffin," but has also been supported by "the park's trail crew, the Paradise Plan Committee, and [the] Paradise interpretive and ranger staff" (Rochefort & Gibbons: 1992, 124). In 1992, five years into the project, the Paradise restorationists had completed "restoration on half of the bareground sites identified as having critical erosion potential" (Rochefort & Gibbons: 1992, 126). The project had cost $670,000 (US), of which 30 percent went to wages and 70 percent to supplies, and consumed 19, 604 workhours (*Ibid.*). In the article, the authors, Rochefort and Gibbons, expressed their hope that the remaining areas of critical erosion potential would be restored within the following two years, at which point the restorationists could focus their "efforts on resource protection and restoration of areas with moderate erosion potential" (*Ibid.*).

Although its size and scope is quite grand, the Paradise Meadows project can be considered a fairly typical restoration project. Aside from their concern with obtaining sociological information about errant hikers, most of the questions the restorationists face are scientific/ecological: what are the soil compositions of the meadow, what are the rare or endangered species that require particular protection, and so on. These kinds of questions are common to most restoration projects.

Another article in the same issue of *Restoration and Management Notes*, however, gives insight into the cultural, as well as ecological, issues that surround supposedly "typical" restoration projects. In "Carving up the woods: Savanna restoration in northeastern Illinois," authors Mendelson *et al*, "begin with some thoughts about the relationship between nature and humans, for it is against this background that the value of restorations must ultimately be judged" (Mendelson *et al*: 1992, 127). The specifics of this article are less important here than the overt recognition by the authors that restoration projects must be evaluated within a cultural context. Cultural assumptions about what correct restoration should be permeate all restoration projects. Before considering the application of overtly cultural practices such as ritual to ecological restoration, it will therefore be useful to consider further the relationship between nature and culture, as expressed in ecological restoration.

Nature and Culture:
Ecological Restoration in a North American Context

In the introduction to this chapter, I stated that some ecological restorationists wish to use the practice to change North American culture's relationship with nature, and that the purpose of this paper was to evaluate their proposals to effect such change by the use of ritual. Before going on to consider their claims about ritual, however, we must give further thought to this idea that there is a particular North American relationship to nature, one which restoration may either perpetuate or challenge.

Do individual cultures have "relationships" with nature at all? The anthropological perspective is useful here, although there is by no means universal agreement on the matter. Some anthropologists, for example, suggest that nature is less an external "thing" with which we develop a relationship, and more in the order of a cultural artifact. Ingold claims that "general assertions that the human environment is culturally constructed are almost too numerous to cite" (Ingold: 1992, 46). Roy Rappaport appears to support the notion of the cultural construction of nature, writing:

> Nature is seen by humans through a screen of beliefs, knowledge, and purposes and it is in terms of their images of nature, rather than of the actual structure of nature, that they act (Rappaport: 1979, 98).

Elisabeth Croll and David Parkin add that

> anthropologists question the conventional oppositions between human and non-human agency, or between person and environment with the result that persons and their changing environments are regarded as part of each other and as reciprocally inscribed in cosmological ideas and cultural understanding (Croll & Parkin: 1992, 3).

In other words, while anthropologists concede that there is a "nature," of rocks, birds and trees, they suggest that our *perception* or *interpretation* of that ontological reality is at least in part constructed and/or mediated by culture. The forces that inform how a society views nature may vary from culture to culture, but they include narratives, legends and myths, scientific and ecological knowledge, history, and particularly in North America, the media. Alexander Wilson comments:

> Nature is a part of culture. When our physical surroundings are sold to us as "natural" (like the travel ad for "Super, Natural, British Columbia") we should play close attention. Our experience of the natural world - whether touring the Canadian Rockies, watching an animal show on TV, or working in our own gardens - is always mediated. It is always shaped by rhetorical constructs like photography, industry, advertising, and aesthetics, as well as by institutions like religion, tourism, and education (Wilson: 1991, 12).

The "relationship" between nature and culture that draws so much attention from environmentalists and restorationists can therefore be considered something of a misnomer. Nevertheless, the idea is so prevalent within environmental and restorationist literature that one must come to some terms with it. I suggest therefore, that for the purposes of this paper, the idea of a cultural relationship *with* nature is similar enough to the concept of a cultural construction *of* nature[2], that they can be used more or less interchangeably. What is constant among the advocates of ritual in restoration is the idea of change itself, that is, using ritual to change the way one thinks about, and acts towards, nature.

Anthropologists have, in fact, long recognized that cultures tend to express their beliefs about the natural world, and their perception of their relationship to it, in ritual, art, and performance. Studying ritual as one expression of belief systems, therefore gives the anthropologist a sense of how a culture views nature. Croll and Parkin suggest, for example, that the study of cultural beliefs about nature is often

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[2] Besides, one can still have a relationship with something of one's own creation.

> approached, as it were, from the shadows: through ritual, beliefs in spirits and holy sites, ideas of human birth and regeneration, the common origins of mankind and animals, the consubstantiality of human and plant life, the characterization of 'natural' hazards as the wages of sin or the work of malicious non-human forces, or of rain and fertility as the reward of just behaviour or divine beneficence (Croll & Parkin: 1992, 4).

Anthropology, therefore, is an important contributor to the ongoing environmental debate. The study of the social construction of environmental beliefs and values, and their expression in cultural features as diverse as art, ritual, and resource management, helps make cultural assumptions about nature transparent.

But what of the North American cultural construction of, or relationship to, nature? How has it developed and what are its features? Further, although we well know the ecological results of this relationship, can we speculate on this social and cultural consequences?

In the last two decades, much has been written that attempts to describe and account for North America's cultural view of nature. The authors come, not just from anthropology, but from a wide range of backgrounds, including Crosby and Merchant in history, Oelschlaeger in philosophy, Glacken in geography, Turner in literature, and Wilson in landscape architecture and cultural theory. While each author may have a particular approach or emphasis that makes him or her unique, there often appears to be general agreement regarding broad themes and features of the western idea of nature.

For example, some theorists have argued that western constructions of, and accompanying attitudes towards, nature can trace their origins to some of the principles of Judeo-Christianity. Max Oelschlaeger suggests that:

> Contemporary historians and wilderness philosophers, even while they recognize the role of science and technology in environmental crisis, often place more blame on Judeo-Christianity. The biblical notion that God gave *man* dominion over the earth, with injunctions to be fruitful and multiply does appear to foster an aggressive, exploitive orientation towards nature (Oelschlaeger: 1991, 43).

British novelist Julian Barnes captures the sense of righteous aggressiveness towards the natural world suggested by Oelschlaeger in his humorous account of Noah's actions towards the animals on the Ark which had been entrusted into his care:

> As far as Noah and his family were concerned, we were just a floating cafeteria. Clean and unclean came alike to them on the Ark; lunch first, then piety, that was the rule. And you can't imagine what richness of wildlife Noah deprived you of. Or rather, you can, because that's precisely what you do: you imagine it. All those mythical beasts your poets dreamed up in former centuries: you assume, don't you, that they were either knowingly invented, or else they were alarmist descriptions of animals half-glimpsed in the forest after too good a hunting lunch? I'm afraid the explanation's more simple: Noah and his tribe scoffed them (Barnes: 1989, 14).

While the biblical references granting humankind dominion over the earth and its creatures may carry an implicit *noblesse oblige*, in other words, that we also must act as the earth's stewards, it has nevertheless helped to create a cultural ethos of entitlement. There is built into our culture a sense moral justification to use whatever of the world we choose, in any manner we see fit.

A second major contributor to the North American culture of nature that Oelschlaeger identifies is Modernism. Beginning with the Renaissance, Modernism celebrated the rise of science and technology as a way for coping with wild and capricious nature, making human life easier and more meaningful. Morally justified by Judeo-Christianity to act as we please, Modernism gave western culture the tools to exert dominion:

> Modernism - understood as a historical movement that begins with the Renaissance and extends to the present - is...analogous to alchemy, for through science, technology and liberal democracy modern people hoped to transform a base and worthless wilderness into industrialized, democratic civilization (Oelschlaeger: 1991, 68).

In a sense, faith in the technological promise mentioned above really began with Modernism. Science offered a way of knowing the world that seemed to be unbiased, free from superstition, and promising in terms of its ability to offer power and control to those who cracked nature's secrets. Critics of Modernism, such as some ecofeminists, point to the tendency at this time to feminize nature and view science as a male hero/aggressor which could bind nature "into service," and make her a "slave" courtesy of the mechanical arts (Merchant: 1989, 169).

Modernism was not immediately and universally accepted, however. Some found its dicta too harsh, and its faith in human ability and the moral rightness of progress presumptuous. The best known response to Modernism was Romanticism, an artistic movement best represented by authors such as Blake, Wordsworth, Byron, the Shelleys (Mary and Percy Bysshe) and Keates. Oelschlaeger comments that:

> Romanticism epitomizes the literary (and artistic) response to Modernism. Like the physico-theologists, the nineteenth-century English Romantic poets were defenders of the faith. To the Romantics nature was not a lifeless machine, mere matter-in-motion, but a living organism created by divine providence; they believed that God's presence was revealed through an aesthetic awareness of nature's beauty (Oelschlaeger: 1991, 99).

Romanticism simultaneously disdained what it perceived as the greed and harshness of modern life, and warned of the folly of humanity's desire to know all the secrets of nature. For example, Wordsworth laments that he and his contemporaries "lay waste our powers" with their fixation on "getting and spending." They see "little in Nature that is ours," to the point which Wordsworth claims that he would rather be a "pagan suckled in a creed outworn," in order that he might feel a part of the mysteries of nature (Wordsworth in de Roche: 1975, 169-170).

Mary Shelley, on the other hand, uses *Frankenstein* as a frightening warning of the dangers of over-ambitious scientific exploration. The creature, which is brought into existence by Dr. Frankenstein's experiments with the force of life, wreaks havoc on Frankenstein's family and loved ones. Moral of the story: we know not what we unleash when we are arrogant enough defy the laws of nature.

Modernism and Romanticism were both underpinnings to another powerful philosophical/historical movement of the latter half of this millennia - Imperialism. The Judeo-Christian ethos of entitlement, combined with powerful technologies (military, communication, and so on), spurred European nations to expand over virtually every part of the globe. Back at home, social sciences such as geography and anthropology combined with literature and the arts to create and recreate representations of colonized landscapes and peoples. Edward Said writes:

> The great cultural archive, I argue, is where the intellectual and aesthetic investments are made. If you were British or French in the 1860s you saw, and you felt, India and North Africa with a combination of familiarity and distance, but never with a sense of their separate sovereignty. In your narratives, histories, travel tales, and explorations your consciousness was represented as the principal authority, an active point of energy that made sense not just of colonizing activities but of exotic geographies and peoples (Said: 1993, xxi).

In other words, Europeans advanced onto foreign landscapes, and ignoring the already existing ecological and cultural histories embedded in them, created them anew to suit Western interests. Colonial landscapes and their inhabitants may have been represented as pristine and noble by Romantics, or savage and dangerous by Modernists, but ultimately they still fell under western dominion. In North America, the expanse of the continent faced its conquerors as "an entirely foreign, all-powerful and unassailable might, towards which they behaved as animals" (Duerr: 1985: 92). Landscape was converted into "mere matter" (*Ibid.*), nature into resources, and whole cultures into "savages" (*Ibid.*, 68).

The colonial imagination has left a legacy that constructs nature and civilization as two opposing entities, circling each other warily through history. There is an exciting, almost Conradian appeal to the idea that nature is some primal force just beyond the lights of the city, and that culture stands as a vanguard against the savage instincts and animal desires (such as the ones to which Colonel Kurtz succumbed) in our own subconscious. But this legacy also means that our particular cultural idea of nature cannot easily overcome the separation between nature and culture and we therefore consistently see the world as "space to colonize" rather than as a "place to live" (Wilson: 1991, 120).

The opposition of culture and nature persists very strongly even in the most recent incarnations of North America relationship with nature, and has not been resolved despite the attention paid to this issue by the last century of environmental philosophy, and the thoughtful contributions of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, and many others. In fact, it is possible that at least some expressions of contemporary environmental philosophy, such as "deep ecology," *further* a sense of culture's separation from nature. Wilson comments that "they [certain environmentalists] invariably understand nature to be good and civilization - or, in the formulation of deep ecology, humans - to be bad" (Wilson: 1991, 40-41). North America's historical tendency to see nature and culture in opposition, with nature as little more than a resource for culture, has resulted in well-known environmental consequences, including pollution, species depletion, acid rain, and so on. The practice of ecological restoration is therefore framed by both our culture's inherited beliefs about nature, and by the current environmental crisis they have caused.

There is, however, an immediate socio-cultural context that is also shaping the development of ecological restoration; the philosopher Alberta Borgmann refers to this as a shift from Modernism to Postmodernism. Modernist thinking has not only shaped our relations with the natural world, it has also shaped our social world, and within both spheres has been characterized by certain features, such as, for example, the desire to use science and technology in order to predict and control events (Borgmann: 1992, 2). The modernist penchant for prediction and control has had far reaching consequences for our culture's social and political well-being, as well for our ability to interact in a healthy way with the environment. For example, Borgmann comments that the rise of Modernism has seen a decline of public participation within social and political spheres:

> In bringing out the predictive and controlling intentions of modern discourse about the future, I am not concerned with highlighting the limits of social science or the seriousness of social and environmental problems. These are real enough. But even if we could overcome these obstacles, the crucial debility of the rule of prediction and control would remain, namely, the expatriate quality of public life. We live in self-imposed exile from communal conversation and action. The public square is naked. American politics has lost its soul. The republic has become procedural, and we have become unencumbered selves.

> Individualism has become cancerous. We live in an age of narcissism and pursue loneliness. These expressions are alarming not because they predict the ruin of the state; prediction and control, for all their liabilities, will continue to provide comfort and stability. Rather, these expressions of distress should disquiet us because they indicate that we have no common life, that what holds us all together is a cold and impersonal design (Borgmann: 1992, 3).

Social alienation is compounded by separation from nature. We fear natural environments precisely because we cannot fully control them, no matter how sophisticated our meteorological and geological tools. As a result, we often turn away from authentic experience outdoors, and seek comfort, amusement and stimulation in commodities. And when we are willing to venture outside, we inevitably see nature itself as a commodity, an experience to be purchased with the right airline ticket, theme park pass, or camping equipment:

> People are not comfortable enough in the outdoors to feel what they cannot control. For many people, malls replace opportunities to interact in a natural setting. And nowadays outdoors means summer vacation, camps, the beach, a ski slope, a manicured lawn, maybe a garden. Outdoor activities are often as controlled as the temperature and humidity of an indoor mall. They are manipulated and designated a certain time period, two weeks paid in July. Could it be that malls and manufactured recreation settings have become "natural" for many people? (Holland: 1994, 121-122).

The modernist fracture our culture appears to have from the natural world is more often than not exacerbated by technology. Technology is a pervasive fact of modern life, a defining feature of the world as North Americans know it. Max Oelschlaeger writes:

> Among other modernist articles of faith is belief in the myth of the technological fix; that myth is grounded in a radical faith in the power of science to resurrect humankind from any and all travails - to build, in effect, a New Jerusalem (Oelschlaeger: 1994, 11).

Technology mediates most human experience in the modern, and increasingly, postmodern world - it creates and recreates most work and leisure activities. The enduring technological promise is that technology will free humanity from labour, so that we may concentrate on 'higher' pursuits, leisure, and social interaction. But a realistic assessment of technology disproves that assurance. For many, the technological world demands greater labour and time than at any other point in history;

for others, who are effectively shut out of the economy through a lack of skills, education, or available jobs, the technological promise is one they cannot afford.

Borgmann sees many features of the modern/postmodern world, such as the pervasiveness of technology, as conditions that engender one of two basic responses: hyperactivity or sullenness. For the cultural elites in law, medicine, academe, and business, the professional world demands "hyperactive work habits," long and intense work days and profound amounts of labour. Borgmann adds that "there is religious fervor in this devotion to hyperactivity...it provides direction in the face of idleness and doubt and serves as the warrant of individual accomplishment and salvation" (Borgmann: 1992, 16).

For others, however, who have neither the education, jobs, or will to engage in hyperactivity, the general response is sullenness and alienation. Borgmann argues that this massive sullenness is obvious is social trends such as "the decline of literacy, the lack of scientific understanding, the deplorable state of physical fitness, [and] the cancerous growth of the video culture" (*Ibid.*, 5). Sullenness is also apparent in "diffuse and anecdotal ways, in numberless incidents of careless service, shoddy work, wasted time, scattered trash, and mindless consumption" (*Ibid.*).

Interconnected with hyperactivity and sullenness is a widening separation many people have from things real and enduring in the world. For example, Borgmann describes the tendency of the technological world to turn *things* into *devices*; Borgmann refers to this as the device paradigm. A *thing* is "inseparable from its context...its world, and from our commerce with the thing and its world, namely, engagement" (Borgmann: 1984, 41). A *device*, on the other hand, is split into commodity and machinery, the thing we want and the means by which it is produced. For example, music can be a *thing*, produced among friends at a gathering through the skilled playing of instruments. It can also be a *device*, however, such as when one plays a CD. The CD player is the *machinery*, which makes few demands on "our skill, strength, or attention," and it produces the *commodity*, music (Borgmann: 1984, 42). Commodities tend to exist in the foreground of our attention, but the energy required to make and operate them, their real context, tends to exist in the background. This background is usually concealed from view, such as, for example, the landfill site far out of town which we fill with boxes and wrappings from CD players.

Technology is also distorting real experience and authentic engagement with the world through the creation of "sophisticated and glamorously unreal" worlds we can participate in through drugs, television, videos, virtual reality and personal computer programmes (Higgs: 1991, 100). A particularly disturbing example of this is "cyperporn", interactive computer programmes that let one have "virtual sex" with ever willing computer vixens.[3] Complicit in this cultural severance from reality is the increasing availability of new consumer items that replace real things. We have Nutrasweet for sugar, Cool Whip for whipping cream, margarine for butter, and so on. Consequently, "the security of our ability to distinguish between the artificial and the real is being challenged...as the former overtakes the latter", we "become inured to the production and consumption of artificial objects [and] they begin to coalesce around the center of our lives, displacing the real or authentic character of the world"(*Ibid.*). The result is that our ability to feel "unforthinkable joy and inescapable pain" is dulled (Borgmann: 1992, 12). We are left emotionally impotent and awash in devices.

Ecological restoration then, is framed within ecological crisis, but also within a cultural context that some consider to be a shift from Modernism to Postmodernism. Modernism, most clearly characterized by the desire to predict and control natural and cultural events, has left a legacy of faith in, and reliance on, technological devices. The dominant responses to the pervasiveness of technology in the modern/postmodern world are hyperactivity, sullenness and a growing inability to distinguish the authentic from the artificial. Restoration, therefore, depending on the goals for the practice set now, may develop into a practice that perpetuates these cultural patterns, through, for example, a reliance on purely technological solutions. It is also possible, however, that through creative discussions and approaches to restoration, the practice will emerge as one that consciously seeks to address cultural as well as ecological issues.

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[3] Vixen is, of course, a gendered term, but I use it here because by far the majority of computer sex games appear to involve female characters for male users. For example, *Glamour* magazine recently described a computer game wherein the player get to seduce a buxom cheerleader.

Ecological restoration has been lauded as a practice which stands to both repair damaged ecosystems and help reform the ecological ethos that has, at least in part, contributed to the prevalence of disrupted natural systems in the North American landscape. Its function as a means to reverse, or at least reduce, environmental damage appears straightforward; its ability to challenge the cultural patterns that have contributed to ecological, and even social, crisis is less so. Those who want to incorporate ritual into restoration cite many motivations, but they all come back to this idea of changing individual and cultural relations with nature. I would now like to look at their proposals in greater detail; the rest of this paper is therefore an exploration of how theorists and practitioners such as Jordan and Westfall are incorporating ritual into their work. The first step in this will be to describe my brief visit to Madison, Wisconsin to view the work of Jordan and Westfall, and to discuss with them the role of ritual in restoration.

Chapter Two

Field Report:
Madison Wisconsin, Autumn 1994

I chose to visit Madison, Wisconsin for my field research on the recommendation of my advisor, Eric Higgs. Madison can be considered a focal point for much of the restoration movement in North America. The restored Preserve of Sauk County, for example, made so famous by Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, is a short drive out of the city. In Madison, the University of Wisconsin Arboretum is one of the oldest, most successful, and beautiful restoration projects in the United States. The Arboretum is also home to *Restoration and Management Notes*, the first journal devoted exclusively to restoration issues.

The purpose of my field research was to see several restoration projects, such as the Curtis Prairie at the Arboretum, close at hand, and to spend time with restorationists who incorporate ritual into their work. My methodological approach in Wisconsin included both participant observation in restoration/food growing rituals, and the formal and informal interviewing of informants.

My principal informants, William (Bill) Jordan III and Barbara Westfall are both comfortable being identified in this thesis due to their roles as advocates for the inclusion of ritual and performance in ecological restoration. Bill Jordan is a botanist by training; currently he is editor of the journal *Restoration and Management Notes*, and a member of the staff at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum. Jordan has also written and "coedited a substantial collection of scientific papers," and as well as the book *Restoration ecology: A synthetic approach to ecological restoration* (Baldwin *et al*: 1994, 8).

Barbara Westfall is an artist and restorationist who lives just outside of Madison at the "Gathering Places Community Garden," a farm she runs with her husband, Carl Johnson.[1] Westfall has an M.F.A. in art from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and her art and restoration projects have been displayed at the UW-Madison Arboretum and the Madison Art Center. She also teaches, having developed courses in art and ecology for both young children and students at the UW-Madison. In addition, Westfall has created symposia on art and ecological restoration for the Society of Ecological Restoration, the most recent of which, at the 1994 SER conference in Lansing, Michigan, was done in collaboration with fellow ecological artist Renee Miller. In much of her work, including that on the farm, Westfall attempts to fuse ritual and art in order to highlight the land and her work on it.

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[1] Barbara actually has some reservation about the word "farm", feeling that it implies a certain kind of mechanized, large-scale food production operation. I hope she will forgive me the use of the

An example of one of Westfall's projects that illustrates how she combines her art with ecological restoration is her 1991/1992 project *Daylighting the Woods*, the full version of which was created "on a small prairie knoll adjacent to the UW Arboretum's Curtis Prairie" (Jordan: 1992b, 108).[2] *Daylighting...* turned a restoration project, the girdling (and thus killing) of an aspen grove that had grown overgrown the prairie knoll (and was thus impairing the surrounding prairie's ability to get light), into a piece of artwork (*Ibid.*). Westfall described the project in *Restoration and Management Notes*:

> My idea...was to create a visually-heightened experience of the death of the aspen and the exposure of the prairie to sunlight. To do this I enhanced the visual effects of girdling, which had been carried out by Arboretum volunteers the previous spring (1991), by scraping the girdled area to expose the bone-like quality of the bare wood - a visual reference both to death and to the similarity and kinship of the trees with humans and other animals. I then removed the epidermis from the bark below the girdle, which is rough, exposing a golden-orange layer beneath, and enhancing the contrast with the smoother, gray-green bark above the girdle. I also widened the girdled area, making the edges ragged, and used paint, rather like mascara, to stain the edges, making them visually more important (*Ibid.*).

Jordan describes Westfall's project as "a quietly eloquent, visual testimony to the process of discrimination and respectful death-dealing that are integral parts of the restoration process" (*Ibid.*).

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word here... "garden" does not quite capture the size of her place, and the quantity of food she produces to feed herself and others.

[2] Smaller, indoor versions of this exhibit were installed at the UW-Madison Art Department and at the Arboretum visitor centre.

My goal while in Wisconsin was to see Jordan and Westfall's work close at hand, partly in order to get a general sense of restoration projects in progress, but also to see how they relate to the particular landscapes they are restoring and, in Westfall's case, farming. My key question both for myself and my informants was "what is the role of ritual in ecological restoration"? I had not yet posed a strong thesis about the role of ritual that I was seeking to prove or disprove. Among other reasons, this was because I had not found one agreed upon definition of ritual to which restoration practitioners had been referring. Another aspect of my field research, therefore, was to find out what my informants meant by ritual.

As I mentioned above, two sites in Madison are virtual pilgrimages for restorationists. The first is the Sauk County Preserve of Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There.* It is not a public park, but one may obtain permission to see it by contacting Aldo Leopold's daughter, Nina Charles. Leopold bought the property in April, 1935. Then, it was a "worn-out, abandoned farm on the Wisconsin River" (Flader: 1974, 29). Leopold and his family turned an old chicken coop, into "the shack," their tiny weekend home on the land. They also set about "the soul satisfying experience of restoring the land to ecological integrity" (*Ibid.*). *A Sand County Almanac*, published posthumously, captures Leopold's love for the place, and his intricate knowledge of its ecology. It also served as a testament to his land ethic. In the introduction, Leopold writes:

> That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten (Leopold: 1966, xix).

My host, Barbara Westfall, and I visited the Preserve shortly after my arrival in Madison, with a copy of *A Sand County Almanac* to share between us as we walked. The Preserve is a stunningly beautiful spot, largely thanks to Leopold and his family's decision to "build a little forest" for themselves over the abandoned farm (Meine: 1988, 364). Barbara, Calder (her ten month old son), and I made the trip on a sunny, warm afternoon. We left the car out by the quiet road that runs outside the Preserve, and then walked down a short path with tall prairie grasses on either side of us. We saw some small evidence of wildlife - a little snake basking in the sun squirmed off the path as we approached. Within a few seconds of leaving the car, we saw a tiny house - Leopold's "shack" - with a garden out front, a swing for two hanging from an oak tree, and little benches surrounding a sort of podium in the yard. One got the impression that it was a place for fun, learning and work, and indeed Leopold and his family spent many days there which they describe as happy and rewarding despite that difficult challenges they faced restoring the surrounding landscape.[3] While we could not actually see into the shack, we could imagine what it looked like inside, with its wooden floor and whitewashed walls (Meine: 1988, 392).

The ground around the shack was so luxuriant with freshly fallen leaves that it was impossible to resist making a pile of them in which Calder could play. He crawled around in them, hooted and hollered, and threw them up in the air. To one studying ritual and speculating about the importance of members in our culture re-engaging with nature, it was obvious that simply spending time outdoors, especially in the company of children, is a good first start, regardless of one's position on ritual and/or restoration. After Calder tired himself out in the leaves, the three of us went for a walk. First we followed a path down through more a grassy slope to the Wisconsin River. We walked along a sandy bank for a while, but eventually it got too difficult to follow, so we hiked back up to firm ground. To a western Canadian, the Wisconsin landscape feels rather like an example of a living American tradition, a cross between the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Little House on the Prairie*. I realized that direct experience on landscape, such as Calder playing on the leaves, can be a rare thing indeed. So much of our experience with nature is filtered through, or even constructed by, our stories and narratives about particular landscapes.

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[3] Leopold and his family's restoration efforts at the Preserve are especially impressive considering that the work was started during the "dirty thirties" when Wisconsin, indeed much of North America, was plauged with frequent droughts. The Leopolds planted thousands of trees and shrubs that died due to the droughts, but they persevered (Meine: 1988, 364, 376, 392).

One last, but significant note about our visit to the Preserve. On the way out, two weary women and a sleepy baby, Barbara paused long enough to collect some seeds from the grasses growing by the footpath. She explained that the grasses were of a kind she was trying to restore on her land. I realized that for many who work in ecological restoration, landscapes become *active* things. Barbara perceived a connection between the prairie in her backyard and the prairie at Leopold's place. Her experience at the Preserve was therefore perhaps more intimate than mine. Her greater knowledge of local ecology and geography would play a large part in such a distinction, of course, but my impression was that Barbara's restoration work also gives her a focus, a way of relating to landscape that is perhaps more subjective, or at least heightened, than others who experience the land in a more objective fashion.

The day after my visit to the Sauk County Preserve, I went to the University of Wisconsin Arboretum. The Arboretum was created in 1934, "under the leadership of a handful of ecologists and conservationists that included Aldo Leopold, Ted Sperry, John Curtis, and Henry Greene" (Jordan: 1994, 31). Leopold, who had been appointed to the University of Wisconsin in August, 1933, was the first research director of the Arboretum. His goal was to work with "professors and students from various disciplines to plan and conduct the restoration of native ecological communities" (Flader: 1974, 26). Jordan writes that the Arboretum, "was a pioneering project from the first, and today the resulting collection of restored prairies and forests is considered the oldest and most extensive such collection in the world (Jordan: 1994, 31). He adds that the Arboretum

> is widely regarded as a model for the idea of ecological restoration in its strictest sense, and has served as an inspiration - and in some cases even as a source of seed - for numerous projects at other locations (*Ibid.*).

In addition to its scientific value and aesthetic beauty, the Arboretum is also valued by Madison residents as a place to volunteer their labour, and participate in ongoing restoration efforts in what is virtually their own backyard.

My interview with Bill Jordan was lengthy, ranging over many facets of his work, but concentrating on the role of ritual in restoration. Jordan's interest in ritual began to develop in the 1980s after reading an article by Starker Leopold (Aldo Leopold's son) about restoration in national parks. Jordan was struck by a metaphor that Leopold employed to speak of how restoration work in national parks should be "behind the scenes," so that the visiting public would be presented with the "illusion" of nature (Jordan: 1994, interview). The implied metaphor of theatre and the performing arts appeared apt to Jordan, but the sense of the public being excluded from participation in it it seemed wrong. To present park-goers with a facade, or stage-scene, of wild nature would be to "perpetuate the myth of untouched wilderness" and deprive people of "the knowledge of our relationship with it" (Jordan: 1994, interview).

Yet Leopold's use of language from theatre had caught Jordan's imagination, and he began to speculate how the metaphor might be actively applied in a way that would encourage public knowledge of, and participation in, restoration - the very opposite of what Starker had been advocating. Further, Jordan began to see ecological restoration as representing a performing art in and of itself in which the goal, to include public input, would be realized by having the restoration work "front and centre stage...a performing art which everybody sees and ultimately which everyone gets a chance to participate in" (Jordan: 1994, interview).

Jordan was at this early stage of development in his thinking about ritual/performance in restoration when he met Frederick Turner. Turner, a Founders Professor of Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas, "is a poet, literary scholar and essayist" (Baldwin *et al*: 1994, 8). Turner has written extensively on both ecological restoration[4], and the role of ritual in modern culture, continuing a family tradition of interest on the latter subject (he is the son of anthropologist Victor Turner). Turner convinced Jordan that, from the point of view of anthropology and literary studies, the metaphor of restoration being like a performing art was not a "trivial" one. Ritual and performing art, despite the aversion our secular culture has for them, are in fact building blocks of culture, and have enormous transformative power. In other words, ritual "is a way to rebuild the world" (Jordan: 1994, interview). Its practically magical ability to transform "a" into "b" makes ritual a "powerful technology" for restoration as it means the ability to convert degraded or damaged land into something healthy and vital.

The importance of ritual and performance is not just limited to the conversion of landscape, however; ritual also "transforms people," and by extension, culture itself (Jordan: 1994, interview). As the "quintessence of custom", ritual "trades up" from *effective* impact to *expressive* impact. In other words, ritual summarizes the work being done, and acting as a sort of condensed version of the work, has just as much of an impact. Ritual is a "compact, tractable, accessible, portable moment" or act that can provide the means through which to negotiate the relationship between nature and culture (Jordan: 1994, interview).

Jordan suggests that participants in restoration rituals may not even need to *believe* in the efficacy of the ritual, or be fully aware of the greater context in which the ritual is occurring. The ritual may have direct ontogenetic power capable of causing change in landscapes, individuals and communities. For example, a strong case of this is the sacrament, which Jordan argues, may have spiritual and psychological power *regardless* of one's belief in the bread and wine becoming the body and the blood of

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[4] Baldwin *et al* refer to Turner's essays on ecological restoration as being "among the most persuasive arguments for ecological restoration... [and] the best existing justification for an active human role in shaping nature" (Baldwin *et al*: 1994, 8). I find this hyperbolic; Turner's insights are interesting, but not necessarily convincing. The reader will be able to judge a little better for him/herself in Chapter Four of this paper, in which I discuss some of Turner's theories in some detail.

Christ (Jordan: 1994, interview). The weaker example of this would be in a theatrical performance where an audience member may experience a mood created by a play regardless of his/her willingness to be in that mood. Performance, Jordan believes, has a power to act upon one, even perhaps, against one's will. Applied to restoration, the implication of this is that the application of rituals may have the ability to transform both landscapes and people irrespective of actual belief in the rituals. In other words, there is no question of trying to "shove an ideology" down anybody's throat. Restoration, and the use of ritual therein, is more a matter of saying, "Here's some nice work. Do this and see what happens to you" (Jordan: 1994, interview).

The problem, of course, is how to develop rituals that will allow our culture to effectively renegotiate its relationship with nature. Jordan rejects the idea that rituals relating to nature can be pulled willy-nilly from other cultural traditions, such as those belonging to Native Americans. Instead, ritual should develop from custom in one's own culture. Restoration, as a custom that "borrows from things which are even more customary, such as gardening, hunting, fishing, and birding," is a practice suitable for ritualization (Jordan: 1994, interview). It is "literal" work, but "like any other real work, or real act, or real event, [it] can be ritualized" (Jordan: 1994, interview). Restoration, therefore, provides a medium, or custom, through which to develop stylized, formal and ritualistic interaction with nature, and these rituals, in turn, may have magical results on the landscape and within the "performance or ritual community".

After discussing these ideas with Bill for nearly three hours, he was eventually pulled away to other obligations, and I was left alone to explore the Arboretum. The Arboretum is a very beautiful place, although it feels more like a park than a remnant of prairie past. It lacks the exclusive and remote beauty of Leopold's Preserve and I found myself thinking that while restored landscapes hold value and allure for me, I *do* like a sense of isolation - a part of my cultural conditioning?

My meandering began with a walk through a garden/park area with lawns, trees, and benches; it was a romantic landscape, much like Richmond Park or Kew Gardens in England. I wanted to see the restored prairie, however, so I hiked down to the left of the Visitor's Centre and walked through the Curtis Prairie. Jordan writes that the Curtis Prairie is "a restored tall-grass prairie that was the first major restoration project at the Arboretum and [which] now occupies 64 acres in the center of the 1,280-acre teaching and research facility" (Jordan: 1994, 31-32). The Curtis Prairie has been under restoration since 1936, originally under the direction of Dr. Theodore Sperry. While the area had been a "mixture of tall-grass prairie at the time of European settlement," about 1830, one hundred years later "the original vegetation had been nearly eliminated and the site occupied mainly by exotic grasses and weeds" (*Ibid.*). Over the past fifty years, the care and attention lavished on the site have brought the prairie grasses back. Now, Jordan writes, the Curtis Prairie and the nearby Henry Greene Prairie, "are regarded as the oldest restored prairies, and quite possibly the oldest restored ecosystems anywhere" (*Ibid.*).

As I entered the prairie, I was struck by the height of the grasses, some of which were flowering despite the lateness of the season. I followed footpaths, eating my lunch as I walked, and passing others, perhaps Arboretum employees or academics from the University, who were walking, jogging, or eating in the sunny, open patches. It was vaguely disconcerting to be in such a landscape, and yet hear the traffic of the busy streets nearby. The Curtis Prairie is an excellent example of the paradox inherent in many restoration sites. It is obviously and carefully cultivated, yet there is a sense that it is "nature". It is much as the whole surrounding landscape would have looked had farming and urbanization not intervened.

Apart from these two "pilgrimages" to the Sauk County Preserve and the University of Wisconsin, Madison Arboretum, most of my time in Madison was spent with Barbara Westfall, out at her home in the country. Barbara is an artist who fuses restoration work, art, and education together in various projects. Her essential belief, one that she tries to incorporate into every piece or installation, is that nature is not separate from culture. To understand nature, therefore, and to change our relationship with it to something that is healthy and sustainable, there is an imperative to explore this relationship through art and ritual. Living with her, one gets the sense that she makes little distinction between art, ritual, and the quotidian activities of her life. In this, she consciously carries on a folk tradition of food production, and honouring both human labour and the land through, for example, the creation of art and seasonal rituals.

Living with Barbara, one gets the sense that her work is a practical example of the kinds of ideas that Bill Jordan is proposing. While Barbara makes no claim that ritual can work magical transformations in people or landscapes, one does get an impression that she uses ritual and art to constantly make herself (and others) aware of the landscape and what it produces. For example, every autumn she hosts a harvest party to celebrate the food her garden has produced over the growing season. She invites family, friends, and anyone who has helped her with her garden. The day I flew into Madison was the day of the party, and I arrived at Barbara's place in the early evening to find it in full swing.

Barbara and Carl's farm is in dairy country in Mt. Horeb, about half an hour outside of Madison. Their neighbourhood feels rather odd because it is a rural landscape half colonized by suburbia. Their old farmhouse, therefore, conveys a sense of belonging to the landscape that many of their neighbours' newer and more modern places lack. Barbara and Carl's property includes a farmhouse, a large garden, several patches of carefully restored prairie, larger patches of fallow grasses, a barn and a chicken coop. There are woods, currently one of the subjects of Barbara's restoration / artwork, nearby.

When I arrived at the Harvest Party, several young teenagers who were eating dinner in the house, told me I could find most of the "grown-ups" down at the barn.

Walking behind the house, past the bonfire, I arrived in the barn to find it full of food and happy people. Looking around, I saw that Barbara's barn is both work place and permanent art exhibit. It provides the showcase for her piece "Gathering Places," about restoration on her own land. The night of the party, the barn was also banquet hall, dance floor, and children's theatre.

Every inch of a long table by the barn door's was replete with food Barbara and her guests had set out for the party. There were the usual party classics such as vegetables and dip, but there were also many dishes that were hallmarks of the season. There was baked squash, whipped with butter, pumpkin pie, vegetable soups, fresh chicken and turkey, home-baked grain breads, bowls of steamed brussel sprouts, baked beans, and salads of spinach and arugula. Home-made wine, kegs of beer, and soft drinks washed the food down. This was not a shadowy remembrance of another era like many "Thanksgiving" dinners, it was a real celebration, an authentic feast.

Hungry after my trip, I loaded up a plate, but was ushered outside by Barbara before I'd had a chance to finish it. She was taking a small group of friends on a quick tour of her property, a mile-long circular walking path. In the fading daylight, the five of us walked through tall grasses, and down a gentle hill. We stopped at a sort of shrine or cairn built into the hillside. It was a little figure, with red candles fixed to its arms. Barbara paused before the shrine, knelt, lit the candles, and explained to us that this was a shrine to the west. She said that we were in an ideal spot to watch the sun go down, and indeed the light there was beautiful at that time of day, even if it was too cloudy to watch the sun actually descend. Calder, whom Barbara had been carrying in a baby "backpack" but had put down, showed his reverence for the spot by trying to eat the candles. Barbara gently reprimanded him, and told him to show respect for the west.

We stayed quietly in front of the shrine for a few minutes, then continued down the hill. We reached a slowly flowing river (the Sugar River, as Barbara was later to tell me), and in it, Barbara's shrine to the north. The shrine was in a little cut-a-way in the river's bank, at the centre of which was an arrangement of rocks. Candles were on the rocks, flowers floated in the water, and ornaments hung from a tree branch over the water, making it look like a "fall" tree instead of the usual Christmas tree. Once again, Barbara knelt, lit candles, talked briefly about the north and what the art piece / shrine meant to her, and then carefully blew out the candles.

We started back up hill, going east towards the next cardinal shrine. The shrine to the east gave one the impression of a swirling thing of orange petals, or arms, or wires spinning out from a central disc. There was a tremendous feeling of movement, and Barbara described the sculpture as being about birth, youth, movement, and beginnings. She said it was in an ideal spot from which to watch the sun rise.

The final stop on our walk was, of course, the shrine to the south. It was a tall piece, made of bright blue wooden panels mounted on a pole. Attached to the panels were dried flowers, a former offering, two figures of deer, a little deer skull, and a little deer mosaic made of out stones. The sculpture evoked long summer days, and feelings of ease and warmth. Standing in front of it, one had a distinct sense of the season just past. We had a sense of metaphorically bidding goodbye to the south, and of turning away from days of being outside in the sun to days inside, storytelling, sitting by the fire, and enjoying the fruits of harvest.

Back at the party in the barn, it was nearly time for the children's improvisational theatre. Barbara had rigged up a clothes line and blankets at one end of the barn. Behind this stage "curtain" lurked a group of children waiting to take centre stage and perform. Four musicians, friends of Barbara, struck up with their fiddles and drums, and the blankets were dramatically pulled back. One little girl stood there. She hopped up and down in one place, singing a song about a lucky rabbit's foot. Soon, all the other children piled out from the wings, and joined her in a big dance. That was the extent of the improvisation; dancing was the order of the day after that.

Barbara and her friend/colleague Renee Miller pulled huge bunches of dried beans, still in their pods on the vines, and wrapped up in sheets, onto the stage area where the kids were dancing. The children hurled themselves on the beans, and jumped up and down on them, threshing the beans out in their happy dancing. One tiny girl, no older that about five, carefully picked up branches of beans (which were as big as her) and piled them together. When she judged she had enough, she threw herself on the pile and rolled around on the beans. The beans, as they slipped out of their pods beneath all the dancing feet, were caught in the blankets.

After the children's "bean dance", the musicians kept playing, and parents and children danced to the fiddles and the flutes. The music was Celtic and quite raucous, with lots of reels and jigs. There was a sense of genuine festivity, of a real celebration of the season, and of the harvest and the community who had worked together to produce the food and the music.

Because I was so tired from the trip from Edmonton, I faded long before the dancers and the musicians. I bade my goodnights, then retreated up to my bedroom in the house, from which I could occasionally hear the sounds of the fiddle, sleepy though I was, into the early morning.

Despite the late evening for Barbara, Carl and some of the guests who stayed, people were up early the following morning, tending children, making breakfast, and drinking coffee. I was "coffee lady" and Carl made a stunning breakfast of hash browns with home-made salsa, and fresh scrambled eggs. It was an easy morning, something of a celebration like the party, but slower. After breakfast we walked over the farm, crossing the Sugar River and going into the stands of woods on the edge of Barbara and Carl's property.

After the initial celebratory weekend, the other days on the farm gave me a sense of a life in which work in the family and on the land is honoured. The honouring comes through praise, as in many families, but also through family and private rituals, and through time spent in the creation of music and art. For example, a fairly "typical" day for Barbara begins early in the morning. Carl minds Calder, and Barbara goes out onto the land. I accompanied her several times on her morning ritual of thanks to the land. It begins in the garden, where she will stand or kneel in front of a fire ring, burning plant material so the smoke drifts over the breadth of the garden. Barbara explained to me that burning plant material left over from each week's harvest is a way of giving back to the land. Ash filters into the rest of the garden and goes back to the earth; she feels that giving back is so important, fire rings should be at the centre of every garden.

One morning, a few days after the harvest party, we burned some of the bean stalks and leaves, left over from the bean dance and subsequent hulling. They burned in a small but brilliant fire for about ten minutes, while we watched quietly, drinking our coffee. Then, Barbara placed "kinick", a mixture of seven sacred herbs, in a little shell by the fire. A little bit of the kinick caught fire, and began to smoke fragrantly. Presently, after the fire burned down, we picked up the shell containing the smoking kinick, and set off for the shrine to the east. It was cloudy, but the air was warm, and when we reached the shrine, it seemed to leap with energy and life. Barbara placed a little purple flower in amongst the weaving arms and the centre metal. She also put a collection of herbs, and the still smoking kinick, at the foot of the shrine. She stepped back, and then sang a little prayer in a language that sounded like it might be Native American. After the hymn, she said a prayer aloud, thanking the east for youth, sunlight, vigour, and movement. Upon finishing the prayer, we stood quietly.

We then continued on to the sculpture marking the south. Barbara presented flowers and kinick to that shrine as well, and then repeated the song she had sung at the shrine to the east. Her prayer to the south, however, was different. She spoke for much longer, thanking the south for long summer days and blue skies, for the long and good growing season just past, and for warmth and soft breezes. She also asked the south to help us accept the shorter, colder days that lay ahead.

We walked back up through the rustling grasses, behind the house with its back "garden" of restored prairie, towards the shrine of the west. There, Barbara repeated the offering of kinick and hymns. To Barbara, the west represents autumn, so she thanked it for the harvest, as well as for the setting sun, for wisdom, and for elders.

Finally we came to the north shrine. On this visit I noticed that the water in which the shrine is placed bubbles gently; Barbara explained to me that she set the shrine in a naturally warm spring. She had realized that the spring was there by noting the bubbles and the movement of the water, and by observing that no ice formed there in the winter. All the shrines were built in places that she had picked through careful observation, seeing with loving attention to detail the nuances in the landscape that made the spots suitable for devotion.

At the shrine, Barbara once again offered kinick, flowers, and prayers, thanking the north, like the west, for old age and wisdom, but also for snow, long, dark nights, and the time to tell stories and legends. Despite north being the final, cardinal point, we were not finished, however. There were still three more directions to pay homage to "complete the circle". First, we thanked the sky, holding the smoking kinick up and staring through the leaf laden branches, up to the grey sky. We thanked the sky for all that was in it: the sun, moon, stars, winds, and the weather.

Next, we huddled close to the ground and thanked "mother earth". Barb thanked her for an especially good growing season, and for all the gifts of the harvest. She also thanked the earth for all the living things that dwell in/on her: people, animals, fish, birds and water ways.

The final point of address was internal. Barb asked me if I'd like to be blessed, and when I assented, she held the kinick over me, then blessed by head, and the thoughts and ideas that I had. Second, she blessed my heart, wishing me bravery and courage. Third, she blessed my feet, wishing them strength for walking "the good red road" (Westfall: 1994, interview). Finally, she blessed my hands, mentioning their importance to the people they touch, the food I prepare, and the computer keys I strike (!). I blessed Barbara's head, heart, feet and hands in return, wishing her much the same as she had upon me.

While the morning rituals Barbara and I completed may have an air of the exotic around them (they do a little in retrospect), there was no sense of that at the time. She has carefully cultivated the rituals, developing them through her artwork, the advice of Native friends who speak of the traditions of the former residents of that land, and from her own cultural (Prussian and American) background. The rituals did not feel like a religious experience. Rather, they seemed like an elegant way to take some time out of the day to think about the various tasks that we do, and to wish ourselves well in the daily execution of them. The rituals made us think about place, they centred us, literally, within the four cardinal points, and they made us think about the seasons and the coming and going of time. Also, they made us focus on individual parts of the landscape with a precision we usually lack. We looked at the sky, the ground, and out to the horizon. Each time we did we saw something new, or something in greater detail than we had previously, such as, for example, the Canadian geese flying down from the north on their winter migration, or a spider's web stretched taut and shining in the tall grass. The ritual also gave us time to be silent on the landscape, and in the silence we heard things that one cannot in the midst of movement or conversation: the wind in the trees, the "plock" of falling leaves, birdsong, the steps of deer. For Barbara, these land-renewal rituals are as much a part of her restoration of her property as the seeding, tending, and burning of native grasses, or refusing to use chemical fertilizers and pesticides in her garden.

The rituals I participated in with Barbara are thus one element of her total approach to engaging in landscape. The art she creates, such as the cardinal shrines, is a means through which to exercise her creativity and a way to give thanks to the land. Her art also provides the means to call attention to both. There is a strong focus on place and belonging, and also on the production of food. For her therefore, restoration is about vital engagement with landscape, whether she is burning her ever-increasing patch of restored prairie, or cultivating land to produce beans and brussel sprouts.

Barbara's artwork, and the rituals she uses to honour the land, have largely developed through the work itself, the daily labours of both farming and restoring. The "bean dance," for example, was both a ritualistic celebration of the harvest and an excellent way to loosen the beans from their pods. It was an obvious and suitable ritual for the occasion. But Barbara and others who wish to incorporate ritual and art into their work on the land also have a long and ancient tradition of land-use rituals upon which to draw, almost all of which are related to food production and giving thanks. In an effort to honour both her family traditions and the history of the landscape, Westfall has systematically inquired into both her familial history, and the cultural traditions of the people who occupied the land before her culture, including, for example, the Winnebago Indians. She combines those traditions with her own sense of art and aesthetics to create a style of interaction with the landscape that is focussed, reverential, practical, and healing.

For example, Barbara has reanimated an old Prussian ritual, in honour of her ancestry, in which she bakes a loaf of bread and buries it in her garden. This "gives back" to the garden, symbolically restoring to it the sustenance that will be taken from it in the harvest. Barbara has also created rituals and art pieces used during specific restoration activities, such as her periodic burning of the prairie grasses on her land.

While my time in Wisconsin was very brief, I did obtain a sense of what restoration sites look and feel like, as well as an indication of what the projects mean to the people who are out on the land. From Barbara Westfall, I also learned about some of the practical applications of ritual, such as, for example, how it can be used to honour the labour of restoration and cultivation. My discussions with Bill Jordan showed me how high the hopes for ritual in restoration run, up to and including the belief that a cleverly developed ritual may be able to work a literal, almost magical, transformation upon restoration projects.

I therefore left Wisconsin with a belief that ritual and performance have at least some role in ecological restoration. While I had had no experience that convinced me of any magical or transformative properties of ritual, my participation in Barbara's work and ceremonies on the farm did suggest to me that ritual is important insofar as it brings communities together, honours the sheer labour of restoration and cultivation, and creates time for contemplation, which in turn, may permit for the time to really *see* and feel one's surroundings. These characteristics are not necessarily the sole province of ritual, of course, but ritual was/is one effective method of realizing them.

Chapter Three

Ritual and Transformation: The view from anthropology

In Chapter One, I described ecological restoration, and the social and cultural context in which it is practiced. Further, I discussed some of the ways in which practitioners are hoping ecological restoration will contribute towards the creation of a new "culture of nature" in North America that will serve as a paradigm for healthier relations between humans and the natural environment. Finally, I introduced the focus of this thesis, the use of ritual in ecological restoration to achieve specific ecological and cultural ends.

In Chapter Two, my field report, I described my trip to Madison, Wisconsin, during which I spoke to some of the principle contributors to the discourse about ritual in restoration. Bill Jordan spoke of the usefulness of ritual in negotiating difficult relationships, such as those between humans and nature. He also proposed that the rituals our culture develops should come out of the *customs* of our own culture, and that restoration is one such custom. Barbara Westfall's home in the countryside just outside Madison, at which I spent a week, is a living realization of some of Bill Jordan's hopes. As an artist, Barbara uses both art and ritual to actively explore the relationship between nature and culture. As a food producer and mother, she also uses art, ritual and restoration to honour the work done in the home and on land, to express thanks for her garden and plentiful harvests, and as a part of a creative and balanced approach to living.

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, however, within the restoration literature, and even among ritual's most vociferous proponents, there is no agreed upon definition of what ritual or performance actually *are*. There seems to be a general sense of what it means, insomuch as it refers to the performance of specific acts that are charged with a certain power. The particulars of ritual, however, such as what counts as ritual or not in actual practice, have remained elusive. It is therefore appropriate to consider the question of ritual more carefully in this chapter before further describing the goals and hopes practitioners have expressed for its incorporation into restoration. What are performance and ritual? What can be considered ritual? What role does ritual serve in culture? Of what is ritual capable?

The Oxford dictionary defines ritual as, "prescribed order, especially of religious ceremony; solemn or colourful pageantry; [or] procedure regularly followed," and performance as, "act, process, or manner of doing or functioning." Generally, the term performance can be used to denote a whole range of activities and behaviours, such as dance, conflict solution, sports, story-telling, acting, and puppetry. Thus ritual is one kind of performance, although other genres of performances, such as sporting events, may share certain dramaturgical properties with ritual, such as costuming, defined settings for the event, formal rules and procedures, and so on. Beeman comments that ritual performances can be distinguished from performance-as-entertainment by the context and function of the event (Beeman: 1993, 378). For example, referring to Richard Schechner's comparison of ritual and theatrical performances, Beeman suggests that in ritual there is an aim to achieve certain results, the audience participates, the audience believes in what is taking place, and criticism is discouraged; whereas in theatre, the aim is to entertain, the audience observes, the audience appreciates but does not necessarily believe in the stage events, and criticism flourishes (*Ibid.*).[1]

In our essentially secular culture, we are quick to think of performances as things belonging in theatres, and rituals as being eccentric practices by exotic cultures, such as, for example, the reenactment of the crucifixion during Easter in the Philippines. We are perhaps less willing to see our own cultural traditions as being ritualistic, such as trick or treating at Halloween, or eating turkey at Christmas. Further, when ritual is taken out of familiar historical or religious contexts, (such as receiving Communion) we tend to be mistrustful of it. Over the course of this research, I have become well acquainted with the uneasiness many in our culture feel about the term ritual. Some to whom I have described this research have eyed me suspiciously when I spoke of ritual in ecological restoration. The assumption is that ritual outside of church must be something suspicious and eccentric at best, or spooky and dangerous at worst.

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[1] These distinctions are very similar to Victor Turner's differentiation between *liminal* and *liminoid* phenomena, discussed below.

Anthropology is one discipline in which the study of ritual traditionally has been seen as a valid and useful activity. While early anthropologists may have been sometimes inclined to look at rituals merely as mechanisms for hapless natives to try to establish control over their seemingly incomprehensible universe (Rappaport: 1979, 27-28), there was nevertheless the assumption that the study of ritual behaviour would lend some insight into the culture as a whole.

Victor Turner is perhaps one of the best known anthropologists to devote much time and attention to the structure and function of rituals. Turner's interest in culture lies not in pure ethnographic description, nor in the "habits" of a culture (Turner & Bruner: 1986, 12), but rather in experience, conflict, passion, and change, what he calls, referring to D.H. Lawrence's writing, "man alive" (Turner: 1982, 13). Thus Turner's focus of study is not in the structure of culture *per se*; instead he explores that which is anti-structure, in the hopes that the moments in which the prevailing structure is challenged or threatened will reveal more about how the society is arranged than, for example, the study of social institutions.[2] The study of ritual, Turner argues, is one way the anthropologist can access the volatile and creative elements of culture.

For example, Turner argues that ritual has an essential role to play in the extraction or creation of meaning from general social experience (especially conflict), and in the negotiation of discord between members in a culture. Turner says that most social conflict follows a model he refers to as *social drama.* Social dramas are characterized by four stages: breach, crisis, redress, and either reintegration or recognition of a permanent schism. During social dramas

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[2] Note: parts of this section are adapted from two original papers. The first, *In Pursuit of Man Alive: A Theoretical Critique of Victor Turner's "From to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play"*, was written for Jean de Bernardi's class, Anthropology 415, in April, 1994. The second, *Fair Thoughts and Happy Hours: Anthropology, Theatre and Transformation*, was written for David Young's class, Anthropology 509, in April, 1994.

> a group's emotional climate is full of thunder and lightning and choppy air currents! What has happened is that a public breach has occurred in the normal working of society, ranging from some grave transgression of the code of manners to an act of violence, even a homicide (Turner: 1982, 10).

As members of a culture take sides and divide into factions after the initial breach, the social drama develops into a crisis. Turner suggests that the phase of crisis:

> exposes the pattern of current factional struggle within the relevant social group, be it village or world community; and beneath it there becomes slowly visible the less plastic, more durable, but nevertheless gradually changing social structure, made up of relations which are relatively constant and consistent (Turner: 1982, 70).

The power holders of a culture are usually the most anxious to find a resolution to the crisis, as any disruption to the status quo may undermine their authority. The next stage, therefore, is redress, during which the culture tries to find some way to deal with the crisis. Redress in many cultures takes the form of the courts or other judicial institutions, and if possible involves "rituals of reconciliation...which, in their verbal and non-verbal symbolism reassert and reanimate the overarching values shared by all..." (Turner: 1982, 75). If the redressive action is successful, reconciliation among the various factions follows, and the culture is at peace again. If the redressive measures are unsuccessful, then the split or schism in the culture may be formally recognized either by a restructuring of the status quo, or by the spatial separation of the disputing parties.

Turner's study of social dramas originally focussed on the Ndembu people in southern Africa, among whom he lived for several years conducting fieldwork. He later extended this model, however, to "more complex societies, large-scale historical movements, and various aspects of contemporary popular culture" (Manning & Philibert: 1990, 15). Turner felt that social dramas had the capacity to reveal "subcataneous" levels of social structure whether at "the familial and village level" or in "international conflict",

> for every "social system," from tribe to nation, to fields of international relations, is composed of many "groups," "social categories," statuses and roles, arranged in hierarchies and divided into segments (Turner: 1982, 10-11).

Whether the group in question was tribal or more "complex", Turner believed that social drama in general, and the redressive stage in particular, "contained at least the germ of self-reflexivity" (Turner: 1982, 11). Social dramas provide the means through which "a group [can] scrutinize, portray, understand, and then act on itself (Turner: 1982, 75). Further, as human societies have "moved through time and become more dextrous in the use and of manipulation of symbols," we have developed the ability to often act out social dramas on purely symbolic levels:

> By means of such genres as theatre, including puppetry and shadow theatre, dance drama, and professional story-telling, performances are presented which probe a community's weaknesses, call its leaders to account, desacrilize its most cherished values and beliefs, portray its characteristic conflicts and suggest remedies for them, and generally take stock of its current situation in the known "world" (Turner: 1982, 11).

Ritual, therefore, has a dual purpose in social dramas. First, it can provide part of the means to symbolically act out social dramas, to explore conflict and redress without necessarily having an actual breach in the social fabric. Further, if there *has* been a serious breach or conflict, ritual or performative activity can serve the "anxious need to find meaning in what has disconcerted us...[and can convert] mere experience into *an* experience" (Turner: 1986, 36). Second, ritual also serves a vital function in the redressive stage of social dramas. Ritual performances may "legitimize" the success of the "winners" of social dramas (Turner: 1982, 74). The winners of social crisis, or those who may need to reestablish their authority, may call for

> the performance of a major ritual celebrating the values, common interests, and moral order of the widest recognized cultural and moral community, transcending the divisions of the local group (Turner: 1982, 10).

In other words, power holders manipulate redressive rituals to secure their positions of authority, and remind members of a society of the cultural values they hold in common.

Another one of Turner's main concepts in his study of ritual is the idea of *liminality*. This concept is borrowed from van Gennep's writings about the three phases that mark rites of passage: separation, transition or *limen* (threshold), and incorporation. The first phase, separation, "clearly demarcates sacred space and time from profane or secular space and time" (Turner: 1982, 24). Transition, the second stage, is a time in which "the ritual subjects pass through a period and area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo which has few of the attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social statuses or cultural states" (*Ibid.*). In other words, one is neither what one was before, nor what one will ultimately become. It may be a time of tests, trials, or hardships. It may also be a time of great freedom during which the initiate has no role obligations to fulfill and is beyond the ordinary restrictions of the social structure (Turner: 1982, 26-27). During the final stage, "incorporation", the initiate is returned to society in his or her new role.

Turner suggests that qualities of the transition phase identified by van Gennep can exist outside of a formal rite of passage, and in fact, are essential elements in both ritual and leisure/play. The essence of liminality, "the analysis of culture into factors and their free or "ludic" [playful] recombination in any and every possible pattern..." is needed for reflexivity, social analysis, and as a spur to creativity (Turner: 1982, 28). Extrapolated from rites of passage, liminality can be expressed as the *liminal* and the *liminoid.* Turner associates the liminal with tribal or early agrarian societies dominated by the Durkheimian idea of mechanical solidarity (Turner: 1982, 53). Here, the liminal is closely tied to the obligations of ritual, and the symbols invoked are representative of collective experience. In these cultures, ritual activity and liminal phenomenon are part of the function of normal daily life, and are associated with calendrical rhythms, such as spring and harvest, and biological events such as puberty and childbirth (Turner: 1982, 54). The liminal is paradoxical for its invocation and presence are a key part of the social structure, yet it often seeks to formally invert it for certain defined periods of time. This inversion, during which the normal rules of the culture are suspended, encourages both insight into the culture, and a spark of creativity; it gives one a sense of all the potential and possibilities *for* the culture inherent *within* the culture.

The *liminoid*, however, while producing much the same effect as the *liminal*, has a quite different set of characteristics. First, it is associated with complex societies and "organic solidarity," in cultures with a firm separation between church and state, and with a high degree of personal freedom and choice (Turner: 1982, 53). The liminoid is also associated with leisure, recreation, and the arts, and therefore is not required by social or ritual obligation. Finally, the liminoid does not seek to invert the social structure, but rather to *subvert* it, to provide social critique and to point out injustice (Turner: 1982, 54-55). Through "experimentation with variable [cultural] repertoires," the liminoid keeps people flexible and open to the possibility of change, without overtly challenging the social structure (Turner: 1982, 52).

One of the fundamental aspects of both the liminal and the liminoid is their creative potential, their ability to effect transformation amongst participating individuals, and by extension, larger parts of the culture. Turner writes that

> Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. These cultural forms provide men with a set of templates, models, or paradigms which are, at one level, periodical reclassifications of reality (or, at least, social experience) and *man's traditional relationship to society, nature, and culture* [my emphasis]. But they are more than (mere cognitive) classifications, since they incite man to action as well as thought (Turner: 1982, 52).

As mentioned above, Turner suggests that in complex cultures like that of North America, liminality is usually expressed as the *liminoid* and experienced in art, recreation, and leisure. The creation of the liminoid is therefore more often than not the province of the "solitary" artist, who is able to "make free with his social heritage" to expose, critique and possibly change his/her culture (Turner: 1982, 52). The artist/writer/composer creates, and his/her audiences "experience collective liminal symbols...ideas, images, etc." (Turner: 1982, 52).

It is worth noting how closely this idea resembles Carl Jung's comments on the process of creation of art, and the purpose art serves in culture. Jung suggest that there are generally two ways in which art is brought into being. In the first case, art springs "wholly from the author's intention to produce a particular result....His material is entirely subordinated to his artistic purpose" (Jung: 1974, 839). In the second case, however, the artistic process may be wholly unconscious, and the impulse to create more or less takes over the artist; "these works positively force themselves upon the author; his hand is seized, his pen writes things down that his mind contemplates with amazement" (Jung: 1974, 839). In either case, however, great art usually involves the invocation of archetypes, symbols and/or mythic situations that have some profound resonance for the artist's audience. These archetypes "stir" us because the summon up

> a voice that is stronger than our own.... [The artist] transmutes our personal destiny into the destiny of mankind, and invokes in us all those beneficent forces that ever and anon have enabled humanity to find a refuge from every peril and to outlive the longest night.... Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking (Jung: 1974, 846).

Art therefore, through its manipulation of liminal symbols and situations, or if you will, archetypes, connects members of a culture both to their mythic past, and to their possible futures. Art also connects members of a culture to *each other*, through the experience of the shared recognition of symbols.

Turner identifies the shared or collective experience of the symbolic or liminal as a phenomena he calls *communitas*. He writes that where liminality is

> socially positive it presents, directly or by implication, a model of human society as a homogeneous, unstructured *communitas*, whose boundaries are ideally coterminous with those of the human species [and, perhaps, with the larger environment]. When even two people believe that they experience unity all people are felt by those two, even if only for a flash, to be one (Turner: 1982, 47).

Liminality induces *communitas*, and *communitas* gives people a sense of human unity beyond all social structures. It is a wonderful, uplifting, spiritual feeling. Turner identifies three kinds of *communitas*: spontaneous, ideological, and normative, and argues that "each has certain relationships with liminal and liminoid phenomena" (Turner: 1982, 47-48). "Spontaneous" *communitas* is that described above, a time when people feel "all problems, not just their problems...could be resolved if only the group which is felt "essentially [to be them] could sustain its intersubjective illumination" (Turner: 1982, 48). "Ideological" *communitas* is a "set of theoretical concepts which attempt to describe the interactions of spontaneous communitas" (*Ibid.*). The memory of *communitas* cannot equal the intensity the original feeling, however, so ideological *communitas* can never be as profound as spontaneous *communitas*. Finally, "normative" *communitas* exists where a group or subculture decides to try to build the essence of *communitas* into the social structure itself. This is essentially paradoxical because spontaneous *communitas* exists in opposition to the bounds of society - it cannot be built in.

While the experience of *communitas* is evidently unpredictable and elusive by nature, it is nevertheless an invaluable tool to those who wish to change or modify the social structure. Turner suggests that "communitas tends to generate metaphors and symbols which later fractionate into sets and arrays of cultural values" (Turner: 1982, 50.). In other words, while the experience of *communitas* provides a "judgement on [the] normative structure," it also furnishes "alternative models" for the restructuring of society; it tears down but also builds up (Turner: 1982, 51.).

The phenomena of liminality and *communitas* suggest by their very nature a sort of rapture, a sense of elevation out of the mundane world to a point where one can achieve the insight and inspiration to effect change. There is a question here, however, about how much *consciousness* one has of these processes as they are happening. Turner posits that sometimes, while participating in sacred or ludic time and space, one loses an immediate sense of self, and experiences, "little distinction between self and environment, between past, present and future" (Turner: 1982, 56). This is the experience of *flow*. Anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff describes it further:

> Czikszentimihalyi has described "flow" as the state where action and awareness merge, destroying a dualistic perspective; a performer becomes "aware of his actions but not of the awareness itself." Heightened concentration and focus on a delimited aspect of reality has the effect of excluding all but the central experience; this obliterates ordinary consciousness: critical, cognitive, perhaps even cynical and solipsistic - the very attitudes that destroy the possibility of belief (Myerhoff: 1990a, 247).

William Beeman suggests that flow is a state many of us may achieve while doing tasks in which "consciousness of the physical body is lost," such as "the states of bodily unawareness attained when driving a car, typing, or playing a musical instrument" (Beeman: 1993, 374). He agrees with Turner and Myerhoff, however, about some of the extraordinary properties of flow, suggesting that the term can be "used to describe the transformative state that excellent performers achieve during the course of performance" (Beeman: 1993, 374).

Myerhoff disputes, however, that performative or ritual activities are necessarily more meaningful or authentic if they produce a sense of flow in their participants. She points out, for example, that while flow is considered "the opposite of reflexive awareness,"

> many rituals induce reflexive awareness just as they invite the fullest participation and concentration that brings about flow. Rituals' perpetual play with mirrors and masks, with borders and transitions, make self-reflection nearly inevitable, telling the individual what s/he is and is not all at once (Myerhoff: 1990a, 247).

Instead of assuming that flow is the desired state sought in ritual and performance, Myerhoff suggests that there may be a higher goal yet: a sort of transcendence which combines a sense of flow with a continuing awareness of self and surroundings.

> Another state may come about: transcendence, where one is aware simultaneously of being in flow as well as aware of his/her actions. This may result in the generation of new possibilities of many kinds; in liminality, the generative and emerging states of mind that Turner has often pointed out are implicit in in-between states (*Ibid.*).

Transformative power, therefore, may yet be generated *without* the abnegation of consciousness that accompanies flow. Belief in the process one is engaged in, which may be heightened by the lack of self-awareness present in flow, may not be necessary for ritual or performance to be effective. Myerhoff, in fact, points out that Rappaport dismisses the idea that belief in rituals is a requirement for their effectiveness. She writes:

> ...Rappaport has stressed the irrelevance of "authentic" experience in rituals. Lying, he points out, is common and permissible. Ritual is a performative genre; one performs a statement of belief through a gesture. That is all that is socially required and all that is of interest to the society. Personal feelings are irrelevant; genefluction is all (*Ibid.*).

From the above, it may be apparent that while anthropologists like Victor Turner, Barbara Myerhoff, and Roy Rappaport have not reached a consensus on the exact nature of ritual, there is at least a consistent interest in the transformative power ritual appears to generate. Whether or not, one is exalted by communitas, engaged by flow, moved by liminal or archetypal symbols; whether or not one even *believes* in the efficacy of the ritual, the anthropologists cited here assume that rituals generate some kind of creative and transformative power.

But what is meant by transformation? Do ritual and/or performance inspire sudden and lasting epiphanies? Or is the transformation more subtle with the result that we see, and therefore act, in the world in a slightly different way? Myerhoff writes that

> everyday usage suggests a transformation is a major and lasting change: in structure, appearance, character or function. One becomes something else, and since we are emphasizing consciousness, we must add, one has an altered state of consciousness, a new perception of oneself or one's socio-physical world, a conversion in awareness, belief, sentiment, knowledge, understanding; a revised and enduring emergent state of mind and emotion (Myerhoff: 1990a, 245).

Transformation, or metamorphosis, has long been of powerful fascination to Western culture. The theme appears in Greek and Roman myths, the medieval passion for alchemy, Shakespeare's plays ("Gallants, I am not as I have been"), Gothic werewolf and vampire stories, and even modern science fiction. We are beguiled by the notion that one thing, be it lead, our beliefs, or our own flesh, may be converted into another. Some in our culture firmly believe that transformation of this sort can be literal and real, and can be effected without fail by ritual. Some devout participants in Roman Catholic or high Anglican communion, for example, believe in the transubstantiation, that the bread and wine consumed literally become the body and the blood of Christ.

If ritual is the key to effecting transformation of matter and spirit, then it is obviously an enormously powerful tool to whomever controls it. However, is ritual in fact such a key? Does the performance of ritual so assuredly set the scene for transformation? Myerhoff argues that the performance of ritual does *not* necessarily guarantee transformation:

> ...transformation is a multidimensional alteration of the ordinary state of mind, overcoming barriers between thought, action, knowledge, and emotion. The invisible world referred to in ritual is made manifest and the subject placed within it. But such experience cannot be compelled, only invited and sought. Hence transformation is seldom made the explicit goal of a ritual, on whose appearance success is though to depend (Myerhoff: 1990a, 246).

After performances and/or rituals, the actors put away their mask and their make-up, and the audience goes home. The transformation that took place during the performance, when one thing did, in fact, become another, has not necessarily been sustained after the performance.

Nevertheless, while literal transformation may lie outside its power, ritual is still of integral importance to culture precisely because it provides the *medium* through which change can be "invited and sought." Rituals are the manifestation of "the inevitability of our imaginative activities, [and] testaments to our capacity to endlessly bring new possibilities into being without entirely relinquishing the old, prior understandings that have given rise to them" (Myerhoff: 1990a, 249). Ritual provides a formal means through which to exercise our creative potential, and to put ourselves in a frame of mind to be receptive to change and/or insight. It is that very willingness that in turn makes actual transformation possible.

A further and important note to make about ritual is that while it is often, as described above, characterized as being a tremendous force for creativity and change, it also has an important normative function in culture. For example, in their anthology

Customs in Conflict, Manning and Philibert discuss Victor Turner's explanation of how rituals act as conduits for social norms:

> Borrowing a metaphor from music, Turner suggests that ritual symbols are like notes, while the ritual as a whole is like a score. The notes give sensory form to culture, expressing it in ways that are visible, audible, and tactile. The score arranges the notes in ways that make them coherent and moving. The dramatic unfolding of ritual tends to associate it with meanings that are physical and emotional, a semantic exchange that embellishes social norms with sensual appeal while also, at the same time, ennobling sensory forms by giving them a normative reference. The overall significance of ritual, therefore, is that it makes moral and collective principles appear desirable - or, at the least, acceptable (Manning & Philibert: 1990, 15-16).

Ritual, therefore, is a process useful in the creation and maintenance of social norms. Through ritual, members of a culture can be persuaded of the desirability of social rules, and accordingly be made more willing to take up their social obligations. Rituals have the ability to convince us of the necessity of certain beliefs and modes of conduct. Further, rituals imbue in us the sense that our cultural values are logical, permanent, and essentially unchanging. Moore and Myerhoff, write:

> In the repetition and order, ritual imitates the rhythmic imperatives of the biological and physical universe, thus suggesting a link with the perpetual processes of the cosmos. It thereby implies permanence and legitimacy of what are actually evanescent cultural constructs. In the acting, stylization and presentational staging, ritual is attention-commanding and deflects questioning at the time. All these formal properties make it an ideal vehicle for the conveying of messages in an authenticating and arresting manner.... Even if it is performed once, for the first and only time, its stylistic rigidities, and its internal repetitions of form or content make it tradition-like (in Cohen: 1990, 44).

Ritual, therefore, does not need to be able to work literal, transformative magic to be a useful technology to those in a culture who seek power. Cohen comments that "symbolic forms and practices are highly manipulable" and group leaders can choose from many "dramaturgical techniques" to develop rituals that are effective and persuasive (Cohen: 1990, 41). For example, music, dancing, language, costuming, the consumption of alcohol or drugs, repetition, and acting all may contribute to the manufacturing of a sense of the traditional and the inevitable. Cohen, discussing the use of ritual at times of life crisis ceremonies, comments that the above techniques, "play on the sentiments of the participants and sway their belief and action in this way or that" (*Ibid.*). Myerhoff adds that through its use of dramaturgical elements and "its insistence on precise, authentic, and accurate forms, rituals suggest their contents are beyond question authoritative and axiomatic" (Myerhoff: 1990b, 90).

Cohen also suggests that part of the power of rituals and other symbolic activity is that they "cater at one and the same time to two types of requirement," they are "essentially *bivocal*, satisfying both existential and political ends" (Cohen: 1990, 46). In other words, a participant in a ritual has the sense that his or her activities express both personal impulses and needs, as well as the "organizational needs of the group to which he [or she] belongs" (Cohen: 1990, 46). Cohen suggests:

> At times [the participant] may be inclined this way, at others that, but often he is unaware of the issue altogether. And it is this ambiguity in their meaning that forges symbols into such powerful instruments in the hands of leaders and of groups in mystifying people for particularistic or universalistic or both purposes (Cohen: 1990, 46).[3]

Manning and Philibert conclude that ritual and "other modes of cultural performance" are therefore always laden with "political significance, and are themselves integral aspects of the wider political environment" (Manning & Philibert: 1990, 29). Rituals contribute to "the construction and certification of cultural knowledge," enforce new or ancient belief systems and cultural norms, legitimate authority and may even, "inspire and mobilize social action" (Manning & Philibert: 1990, 62).

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[3] A striking (if slightly obscure) example of this sort of dualistic function of ritual is Sukarno's manipulation of the Indonesian shadow puppet theatre - *the wayang kulit* - in Indonesia during the battle for independence from the Dutch. The *wayang* was (and is) the best known ritual and performative genre in Indonesia. Sukarno was able to covertly spread his ideas about independence through the manipulation of characters and events in the traditional *wayang* plays. His use of this form went largely unnoticed by Dutch officials, who would not have known the intricacies of the *wayang* well enough to recognize what Sukarno was doing. Eventually, Indonesians watching Sukarno's versions of the *wayang* plays were convinced of their ability to overcome enemies, of the righteousness of freedom and independence, and the quasi-divinity of Sukarno himself. The Indonesians eventually did drive out their Dutch masters, and Sukarno came to power, hailed as *Bima*, one of the legendary heroes from the *wayang* stories. An ironic postscript to this example is that Sukarno's successor Suharto, eventually ousted Sukarno through much the same process, manipulating the *wayang*, and thus the Indonesian public, to secure and validate his own position.

Thus rituals can be transformative or normative. But must they be one or the other? Do they serve *either* the forces of change *or* the voices of authority? And what determines their function one way or the other?

Anthropological theory offers no definitive answer. My belief, based on the readings referred to above, is that rituals often serve both functions at the same time. Consider, for example, the vows of allegiance that new immigrants must make when becoming a citizen of a country like Canada or the United States of America. Pledging to a flag, singing an anthem, promising to serve the government and/or the Queen: all of these rituals work to persuade the immigrant of the significance of membership in the new country. The rituals are designed to convince him or her of the goodness of the country, and the desirability of upholding the laws of the land; thus they are normative. The rituals, however, may also *literally* transform the immigrant into a new citizen. While not every new citizen may be equally moved by such rituals, for some a citizenship oath is a profound experience during which they receive a new identity, and therefore a new sense of themselves. This phenemena may be especially acute if the initate has had to fight for citizenship or had to flee his or her home country. The rituals therefore serve to *make* the new immigrant a Canadian or an American; in this they are transformative.

When a ritual is either primarily normative or transformative, however, what factors can we look to as the determinants of its function? Likely the way a ritual works on its participants is based on three things: the goals and needs of the person(s) designing and implementing the ritual, the desires of the people attending the ritual, and the context in which it occurs. Generally, people taking part in cultural rituals have some sense of the purpose of them; to presume that citizens can be, through the use of ritual, hoodwinked *en masse* by governments or other groups is to presume them foolish indeed. Further, if the context is an informal one, in which, for example, the purpose stated for the ritual is modest and personal, then the result achieved will be different than that of a major state or public event. And finally, we must look to the people who are behind the ritual. What are their goals, why are they doing what they are doing? Do they speak of ambitions to spark change, insight and creativity in people, and does their work bear out what they say? Or are their rituals for normative purposes, to elicit particular beliefs and/or actions from their participants, such as, for example, neo-Nazis who indoctrinate new members with rituals of hate and propaganda? Critics of anyone's advocacy of the use of ritual to achieve certain ends must therefore look with an attentive eye to the goals, means and ends of those who use ritual.

In this chapter then, I have suggested that rituals have both normative and transformative properties, that they may express both simultaneously, and that when they do tend to be more normative than transformative, or *vice versa*, it is likely due to the goals of the ritual's designers and participants, and the context in which it is performed. Before concluding this chapter, however, I would like to briefly pause and consider one other mode of cultural performance, *focal practices*, that has been put forward by Borgmann and others as having transformative properties similar to those of ritual.

Borgmann takes his definition of *focal thing* from the merging of the traditional use of the word "focus" (hearth) with its modern definition:

> figuratively [the two] suggest that a focus gathers the relations of its context and radiates into its surroundings and informs them. To focus on something or to bring it into focus is to make it central, clear, and articulate (Borgmann: 1984, 197).

Borgmann suggests that a *focal thing* is an event or practice which orients and contextualizes the activities of our lives, such as, for example, a formal dinner with friends and family or long-distance running. These things call for emotional, intellectual, and physical engagement, and they draw us deeply into their context. At a formal dinner, for example, we carefully prepare food, perhaps even several courses, and then we eat it at the table amidst family and friends. We may even choose to use precious china, pottery or cutlery, things that we have had passed down to us, or selected just for such occasions. In other words, we exist for a time in an engaged exchange, sharing food and thus participating in a human practice thousands of years old. This stands in sharp contrast with, for example, a foil-wrapped hamburger grabbed from a "drive-through" on the way home from work, and gobbled in the car.

Focal practices need not always be communal. Long-distance running, for example, engages the runner physically, intellectually, and perhaps even spiritually. Borgmann writes of "the great run," in which one:

> exults in the strength of one's body, in the ease and the length of the stride, where nature speaks powerfully in the hills, the wind, the heat, where one takes endurance to the breaking point.... This unity of achievement and enjoyment, of competence and consummation, is just one aspect of a central wholeness to which running restores us. Good running engages the mind and body. Here the mind is more than an intelligence that happens to be housed in a body. Rather the mind is the sensitivity and the endurance of the body (Borgmann: 1984, 202-203).

Like the dinner shared with friends, the emphasis of the "great run" is on its context, not just product or achievement. The great run centers one in one's body and surroundings in a way that reading *Vanity Fair* and plugging away on an exercise bicycle cannot.

Borgmann warns that focal things in our lives our being eroded by the patterns of technology, which both provide the drive-through restaurant and the exercise bicycle, and lead us to prefer them because they are ubiquitous, instantaneous, safe and easy. Focal things now tend to exist at "the margins of mainstream culture where the traditional disciplines that engage mind and body have not been swamped by the pressures and allure of the modern world" (Higgs: 1991, 101).

What would regaining focal things offer us? Would their reemergence in our lives make us fuller beings? Would they make us feel better, more connected to each other and the environment? Could they transform us from being disassociated creatures to beings comfortable in our minds, bodies, and nature? Should we therefore seek them out in every way possible? Borgmann posits that we should not look to focal things to make us *feel* a certain way, or consider them to be devices which will transform our thoughts and emotions in one easy step. Such thinking misses the point of focal things:

> ...focal events [such as dinner and running] are compact, and if seen only in their immediate temporal and spatial extent they are easily mistaken. They are more mistakable still when they are thought of as experiences in the subjective sense, events that have their real meaning in transporting a person into a certain mental or emotional state (Borgmann: 1984, 202).

To focus on the rewards of focal things, such as how a focal thing will make us feel, is to miss the point about the value of the context. Borgmann suggests that concentrating on the "assured results" of focal things perpetuates the patterns of a technological culture in which we ultimately seek to gain things easily, instantaneously, and without hardship. Thus the pursuit of the *feelings* brought about by focal things may lead to a disruption of the very context that formed them in the first place.

Nevertheless, the engagement and fulfillment brought about by focal things are worth pursuing in our lives. Borgmann suggests that a way of building focal things into our lives without turning them into technological devices, is to make *practices* out of them. He writes that the

> human ability to establish and commit oneself to a practice reflects our capacity to comprehend the world, to harbor it in its expanse as a context that is oriented by its focal points. To found a practice is to guard a focal concern, to shelter it against the vicissitudes of fate and our frailty (Borgmann: 1984, 207).

By formulating rules for the practice, and by making ourselves do it repeatedly, we keep faith with "focal things and save for them an opening in our lives," even when the thing itself fails to reward, when "running becomes unrelieved pain and cooking a thankless chore" (Borgmann: 1984, 209).

Focal practices are also the conduits of transformation, although it is a change over slow time, as opposed to the comparatively sudden transformation described above as possible through ritual. Borgmann, referring to Aristotle's description of excellence, suggests that "competence, excellence, or virtue...come into being as an *éthos*, a settled disposition or way of life" (Borgmann: 1984, 207). Thus through focal practices, the repeated experience of focal things, "we are able to accomplish what remains unattainable when aimed at in a series of individual decisions and acts (*Ibid.*).

Borgmann does not specifically distinguish between focal things and practices and rituals; in fact, in his description of "pretechnological" focal practices, he suggests that they are more or less the same thing as what many would call rituals. He writes:

> ...it is helpful to consider the foundation of pretechnological practices. In mythic times the latter were often established through the founding and consecrating act of a divine power or mythic ancestor. Such an act...set up a sacred precinct and center that gave order to a violent and hostile world. Christianity came into being this way; the eucharistic meal, the Supper of the Lamb, is its central event, established with the instruction that it be reenacted (*Ibid.*).

My sense of the difference between rituals as we have discussed them above, and focal things and practices as Borgmann describes them, returns to the Aristotelian concept of *éthos* mentioned by Borgmann. The power of ritual comes from its dramaturgical techniques, from the invocation of liminality: the magic of the moment that sets it *apart* from the profane world. The power of focal practices spring from their repeated acts, their quotidian sense; they are *of* the mundane world.

The anthropological theory discussed in this chapter suggests that despite North American culture's squeamishness about ritual, it is a serious topic for investigation, particularly as it relates to modern proposals for social, and ecological change. Outside of anthropology, ritual is most often associated with spirituality, religion and perhaps aesthetics and performance, all of which are usually seen as the antithesis of serious and scientific investigation. In the following chapters, therefore, I will attempt to define more clearly exactly what is being proposed and discussed in terms of creating specific rituals to incorporate into the practice of ecological restoration, and in turn, discuss how feasible those proposals are in light of what has been presented here. I will also discuss further Borgmann's concepts of focal things and practices, especially as they may apply to the proposals for the use of ritual in ecological restoration.

Chapter Four

Ritual and transformation:
Views from the practice and interpretation

Ritual in Restoration

Having now discussed the anthropological view of ritual at some length, I would like to look more closely at how ritual in restoration is being characterized by its main proponents. As I indicated in Chapter One, ritual is of growing fascination to restorationists, and more and more articles and books are appearing on the subject. Because of the plethora of new-age type books on ritual, spirituality and nature (such as works by Joan Halifax, David Spangler and James Redfield), it can be rather tempting to the social or natural scientist to pass by writings about ritual and restoration with a shudder, dismissing them as frivolous, quasi-mystical, non-solutions to serious environmental problems. To paraphrase Shakespeare, however, there is more meat in the matter.

Reminding ourselves of the environmental context of ecological restoration, Baldwin *et al* write:

> In the past several decades interest in the fate of the natural environment has caused a proliferation of associations, professional journals, popular magazines and successful books. People around the world have been galvanized by concerns about pollution, environmental degradation, and resource depletion.... Intellectual positions and programs have also proliferated.... These ideas range from suggestions that humans should withdraw from nature entirely, through various models for sustainable agriculture and development, to reclamation and restoration projects for damaged ecosystems, and even to studies of how we might transplant terrestrial nature to other planets. In this welter of proposals, there is general agreement that *something* must be done.... (Baldwin *et al*: 1994, 3).

Much of the writing on environmental topics, however, suggests that it is unlikely that we can stop or reverse ecological damage without significantly reordering how our culture views and uses nature. In regards to restoration, it is *possible* that the actual, physical work of the practice alone will contribute to reshaping how individuals, and by extension, the whole culture perceives and interacts with nature. To make it more *likely* that restoration will change our cultural relationship with nature, however, some suggest that we self-consciously make it a cultural as well as an ecological practice. In other words, by purposefully incorporating overtly cultural elements such as ritual, performance, and aesthetics into restoration, we will much more actively explore and re-create our relationship with our environment. In fact, Hartig *et al* suggest that unless members of our culture rethink what human membership in nature means, restoration may be ultimately unsuccessful, doomed to repeat earlier views of nature that contributed to environmental problems in the first place:

> ...values and modes of self-identification may never have been common in human populations. Yet many of us would agree that they must take root if ecological restoration efforts are to succeed in an ecologically meaningful way. Indeed, ecological restorationists who are deeply concerned about the long term value of their efforts are going beyond the physical acts of restoration and are working the soil of human intellectual and ethical capability. In this they are occupied with something that is more creation than restoration (Hartig *et al*: 1994, 134).

Oelschlaeger suggests that humankind has long used cultural elements such as ritual and aesthetics to explore and define our membership in nature. For example, he writes that

> Paleolithic mythology served many functions, not the least of which was to maintain the harmony and order of creation. Religious ritual, dance, and art celebrated the sacred game and the divinely established bond between humankind and the rest of nature (Oelschlaeger: 1991, 20).

While Western culture has retained a tradition of environmental or ecological art which considers the relationship between nature and culture (to be discussed later), this work has become a very specialized activity, the domain of a small number of artists. What would seem to be of need now is some way that the larger population can participate in activities that have some ecological merit, and which, like environmental art, creatively examine the relationship between nature and culture.

Enter ecological restoration and ritual. Restorationist Karen Holland says that restoration rituals "are a necessary means of integrating restoration tasks with people's lives" (Holland: 1994, 122). They "reconnect" people with nature, allowing us to rediscover "what we so often protect ourselves from with concrete and walls and predictable shrubbery" (Holland: 1994, 125). Restoration rituals also connect people to "each other", and develop "companionship, cooperation, and caring" amongst the restoration community (*Ibid.*). Further, restoration rituals are, and will continue to be, an articulation of the changing aspirations for the practice, and will "express our collective restoration hopes to future generations" (Holland: 1994, 125). Holland and Beatrice Briggs suggest that humans are ritualistic creatures in any event, but that the rituals of modern Western culture, such as going to shopping malls, fail to "nourish" and are "meager substitutes for what people really want, a sharing of our humanness" (Holland: 1994, 124).

The question for those who have not been active participants in ecological restoration projects, or who have only been so peripherally, is what would ritual in ecological restoration consist of? What would it look like? I offered some answer to these questions in Chapter Two, when I described some of the land management rituals and celebrations that Barbara Westfall has created on her farm, and the way she has used art to call attention to restoration projects, such as *Daylighting the Woods*. Let us briefly consider, however, some of the other rituals in restoration that have developed over the past several years.

In her article *Restoration rituals: Transforming workday tasks into inspirational rites*, Karen Holland describes several restoration rituals, including, for example, the "Great Thismia Hunt II of 1992" (Holland: 1994, 123). The Great Thismia Hunt was an organized search at the Powderhorn Preserve in southern Cook County, Illinois for the plant *Thismia americana*, of which there had been no recorded sighting since 1912. While the purpose of the day was to find some evidence of this rare plant, and to inventory other local plant species, the organizers also wanted to infuse the search with elements that made the participants aware of the social and cultural significance of their actions. Holland describes the events of the day as follows:

> The day began with participation in a theatrical performance. After Jerry Wilhelm of the Morton Arboretum and Beatrice Briggs, founder of the Wild Onion Alliance and creator of the performance, gave inspirational speeches about the history of Norma's discovery and its relevance today [Norma Pfeiffer was the last person known to have seen *Thismia americana*] , all marched, with a native American drum beating, along a path to a prairie opening.

> As participants stood in silence in a semi-circle, a woman appeared in the distance in the prairie before them. Norma Pfeiffer, dressed in long skirts and basket in hand, a ghostly figure from a previous generation, walked closer to the assembled present generation, constantly stooping to fill her basket. Two children were dispatched to meet her and retrieve the basket, which was filled with small plastic representations of Thismia, a plant no one living has ever seen growing (Holland: 1994, 124).

Holland suggests that the performance and ritual activity that took place during the *Thismia* search "provided a backdrop for a restoration activity and attempted to bridge the gap between an historical generation and the present" (*Ibid.*). The ritual encouraged participation, and focussed "attention on the ecological and historical significance of the days' activities" (*Ibid.*). Finally, the ritual also attracted "the attention of both the press and general public" to the area of the county they were restoring, and to the practice of ecological restoration as a whole (*Ibid.*).

A second restoration ritual that is recounted in Holland's article, as well as in a short accompanying piece by Stephen Christy, is the "Bagpipes and Bonfire festival" in Lake Forest, Illinois. This ceremony/celebration developed out "of the yearly act of burning all the exotics and weedy non-natives" removed from the Lake Forest Preserve (Christy: 1994, 123). It takes place on a Sunday afternoon in the fall, and is attended by more than 1,000 people. Christy says of the festival:

> Every autumn now, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, a great party takes place. After collecting the brush we pile it in the middle of a large meadow overlooking the 30-acre Shaw Prairie in the valley below.
>
> The festival offers family entertainment, period actors, hot-air balloons, and food and drink for all. Then, at dusk, a 100 piece Scottish piping band emerges from the prairie, solemnly circles the brush pile, and plays traditional airs [enough to stir the Celtic blood in anyone]. A solo final of "Amazing Grace" rolls across the prairie as a torch-bearer emerges from the woods far to the west. He runs up the hill, circles the pile three times, and then lights it.
>
> As darkness settles, the crowd intently watches the blaze, backing away as its heat increases. The effect is magical, and silence reigns. The cycle is complete, and the fire works its hypnotic, purifying effect on the landscape and people (*Ibid.*).

Holland argues that ceremonies such as the "Bagpipes and Bonfire" festival are "celebratory, rousing, and filled with pageantry," and that as such, "they invite participation by society" (Holland: 1994, 122). She adds that the festival, "with its bonfire ritual, renews the spirit of a community sharing in the regeneration of a native ecosystem" (*Ibid.*).

Proponents of rituals such as the two described above suggest that restoration rituals may often develop spontaneously through the work itself, such as, for example, the North Branch Prairie Project workday circle. In this ritual, the North Branch workers gather in a circle every morning to "greet each other, exchange information, and receive instructions on how to accomplish the days' restoration work" (*Ibid.*). Holland posits that

> rituals such as those within the tradition of the workday circle are practical, based on experience, and on what works best. They are not necessarily invented intentionally. They may develop spontaneously and be repeated until they are recognized as meaningful within a particular context (*Ibid.*).

Holland suggests that the North Branch workday circles have become ritualized and meaningful because they provide for the exchange of information about restoration techniques, as well as a forum through which to express "concern for member safety and happiness" (*Ibid.*).

Other ritual or performative activities may be more self-consciously developed, or actively invented by those who are interested. Beatrice Briggs suggests that restorationists purposefully fuse scientific knowledge about ecosystems with our "primordial instinct for ritual" (Briggs: 1994, 124). She warns restorationists to not let the terms like myth and ritual "scare" them, for rituals are, after all, only "culturally coded behaviors that provide a heightened sense of meaning and identity and are not limited to the liturgies of organized religion" (*Ibid.*) To develop these rituals, Briggs exhorts restorationists to:

> Experiment and see what happens.... Organize a field trip. Plan a work day. Go out at dusk to watch the owls. Do whatever you love and know best. Only invite colleagues and neighbors to join you. Include children. Seek out drummers and singers. Maybe someone will offer to make a ceremonial banner, something colorful that celebrates the gathering. Ask everyone to bring some food to share and re-usable cups, napkins and utensils. Keep it simple, biocentric and place-based, and you have the makings of an eco-ritual (*Ibid.*).

Briggs also suggest evoking the identity of the natural or restored area, and then fostering a relationship with it, through the use of storytelling. She continues:

> Stand or sit in a circle and tell whatever story needs to be told at that time and place - the story of an ecosystem, watershed, species, season, the task to be done, the tools to be used. Then invite participation from others in the group - a song, perhaps a poem or a prayer (*Ibid.*).

Briggs is well aware of the discomfort many in our culture may have with ceremonies or rituals that seem to belong to a religious fringe rather than to the scientifically and ecologically minded among us. She concludes her piece on ritual, advising:

> You may feel nervous at first, concerned that people will see you as some sort of weird, new age, born-again pagan, when in fact, you are simply a scientist sharing what you know about the inner intelligibility of matter, a voice for the imperiled species and ecosystems around us, a shaman willing to go out on a limb for the healing of the community (*Ibid.*).

While her use of the word "shaman" may be cold comfort to the more practically minded of ecologists and restorationists, they should give consideration to the thought that ritual and storytelling are simply different, and particularly effective, ways of communicating ecological information.

While restoration practitioners such as Briggs, Christy, and Holland have helped define the discussion of ritual in restoration, no one has contributed more to this topic than William Jordan III. Although I have already included some of Jordan's thoughts about ritual in restoration in my field report (see Chapter Two), he has also published widely on the subject, and thus I would like to consider his work in greater detail here.

In their introduction to *Beyond Preservation*, editors Baldwin *et al* suggest that William Jordan and co-contributor to the volume, Frederick Turner...

> ...advocate that we go beyond preservation to take an active role in restoring and actually constructing our landscape with creative ecological ends in mind. Their operating assumptions that humankind is part of nature and thus has an inevitable impact upon it, and their injunction that we accept the responsibility to use our science to make this an ecologically sound and beneficial influence, set them apart from most of todays' writers on the environment (Baldwin *et al*: 1994, 6).

In other words, Jordan's starting premise as an ecologist and restorationist is that human beings are part of nature. Restoration activities, therefore, are not a human imposition on "wild" nature, rather they are conscious effort to make the inevitable human influence on the environment something positive rather than negative.

Jordan also recognizes, however, that many in our culture do not share his view that humans are members of nature. As discussed in Chapter One, even many environmentalists who have given hard thought to the relationship between nature and culture tend to see culture as *removed* from nature, something that stands in opposition to it. In fact, Jordan rather harshly calls the environmental movement to account, suggesting that a "strong sense of distance between humans and nature" is a defining characteristic of "modern environmentalism" (Jordan: 1994, 21). Far from creating the idea of the possibility of a mutually beneficial relationship between nature and culture, therefore, environmentalism has "offered instead...a severely limited relationship characterized by an ethic of "minimal impact"...(*Ibid.*). Jordan says the flaw in this philosophy is that

> the concern here is almost exclusively for the landscape and hardly at all for the human participants, and the resulting relationship, though valuable as far as it goes, is extremely attenuated. It is largely nonparticipatory, and engages only a small fraction of human interests and skills. The person is confined to the role of visitor - an observer of nature rather than an active element of the land community (*Ibid.*).

Jordan warns that this perspective "turns us all - hiker, birder, and strip miner alike - not into members of the community but into users and consumers of the natural landscape" (*Ibid.*).

Jordan believes that because most modern environmental philosophy sees nature as "object", environmentalism has not been able to see past a preoccupation with the *products* of restoration, "the restored communities themselves and their quality" (Jordan: 1994, 29). Jordan argues, however, that the real potential of ecological restoration lies in its *process*, "and its implications for people, both those carrying out the restoration and those looking on - the audience as it were" (*Ibid.*). The result, says

Jordan, is that environmentalism has "missed restoration's value as a way of reentering nature" (*Ibid.*).

Jordan posits that to address the legitimate issues with which the environmental movement is concerned, such as overpopulation and pollution, we need to see the problems as "rooted in human ideas, values and beliefs" and to try to change those as much as find technical solutions (Jordan: 1994, 247). To actually realize change of this sort, we must address "the inner, subjective basis" for our "habits and patterns of behavior" (*Ibid.*). This is where ritual and performance, in addition to the restoration work itself, will prove most valuable. "Recourse to another dimension...of performance, ritual, and make-believe" will encourage creativity and engagement in nature, thus pointing the way "not only how to have a healthy ecological relationship with the world but also how to articulate and celebrate that relationship in a personally and socially effective manner" (Jordan: 1994, 27-29).

Jordan's essays and articles give one the impression that he sees personal and cultural change as an *inevitable* outcome of restoration work, particularly if ritual is incorporated into it. Speaking of such change at the individual and community level, he says that one of the specific advantages of ritual in restoration work is that it is one method of changing "widely shared ideas, values, and beliefs without imposing change from the outside or from the top down" (Jordan: 1994, 247). Jordan acknowledges that education is another such method, but suggests that "education itself is a performing art and [is] inseparable from ritual" (*Ibid.*).

Jordan would have us see ritual and restoration not just as tools for change, however, but as the very premises for a "new paradigm for the relationship between nature and culture" (Jordan: 1994, 30). Jordan describes this paradigm in three stages, first describing "at least some of the essential elements of" a sustainable and healthy relationship between "ourselves and the natural landscape" (Jordan: 1994, 18). He writes:

> First, in order to have a relationship with anything we need the thing itself - in this case the natural or historic ecosystems, the forests, prairies, wetlands, lakes, rivers...and so forth, and all the plants, animals, and abiotic elements, all of which comprise the natural landscape.
>
> Second, we need an ecological relationship with these systems. By this I mean an economic transaction that entails a genuine exchange of goods and services between ourselves and the natural community. This must be reciprocal, or, as Aldo Leopold and others have said, mutually beneficial, involving both taking and giving back.
>
> Third, this relationship must engage all our abilities - those that are innate or "hard-wired" into us by evolution and those that have emerged in the course of cultural evolution. These include our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual capacities.
>
> Fourth, because one of these abilities is a sense of history, and of history as a kind of progress, or at least change, the relationship must acknowledge and deal with the past - the history of our interaction with a particular landscape, and the deeper history of the general relationship of our species with the rest of nature.
>
> Fifth, because our relations with nature continue to change as a result of ongoing intellectual advances and cultural evolution, the paradigm defining that relationship must also be flexible and capable of a creative expansion and development.
>
> Sixth, we are a language-using, social, highly self-conscious species, so we need a way not only to explore and redefine the terms of our relationship with nature, but also to articulate and celebrate that relationship in a personally and socially satisfying way (Jordan: 1994, 18-19).

Jordan continues on to describe how ecological restoration "provides a paradigm that satisfies each of these criteria" for a new relationship between culture and nature. Addressing the first point, Jordan says that restoration projects define the "object" - the natural ecosystem - with which humans can have a relationship. Restoration

> holds out at least the possibility of conserving the system, not by stopping change,but by directing it, and not by ignoring human influences, but by acknowledging and seeking to compensate for them (Jordan: 1994, 19).

Jordan suggests that restoration projects will draw us into these natural systems, and that "acknowledging our membership in the land communities is the first crucial step toward our reenfranchisement in it" (Jordan: 1994, 20). While there is not yet scientific proof that restoration projects can wholly return ecosystems to their original state, Jordan says we should not let this dissuade us. "One cannot duplicate a natural system root hair for root hair and bird for bird"; our goal, rather, should be to reassemble a system "that *acts* like the original" (*Ibid.*). This new, and hopefully dynamic, ecosystem will thus provide the thing with which we can create a relationship.

In terms of this relationship itself, Jordan says that the real challenge to environmentalism is "not to preserve nature by protecting it from human beings...but to provide the basis for a healthy relationship between nature and culture" (Jordan: 1994, 21). In this respect, environmentalism has so far failed us, perpetuating, as indicated above, a relationship in which humans are severed from a sense of membership in the natural world. Jordan says, however, that the restorationist resolves this "dilemma", breaking out of the

> essentially negative relationship with the natural landscape implicit in the preservationist program and [establishing] a relationship with the landscape that is both positive and mutually beneficial (Jordan: 1994, 22).

Jordan also expresses the view that "restoration will become the principal outdoor activity of the next century" with the result that "nature" will be converted "from an "environment" into a habitat for human beings" (Jordan: 1994, 23).

Elaborating on his third point, that the relationship between nature and culture must be one in which all our human abilities are engaged, Jordan comments that once again environmentalism has failed to provide us with a useful paradigm. Jordan suggests that the environmental movement tends to paint the possible human re-inhabitation of nature as at one or the other of two extremes: we will either give up the pretense of caring about the environment, and wade into nature with all-out, western style rapaciousness, or we will abandon civilization, shed our clothes, to attempt a life of "noble savagery," nibbling berries in the woods.

> It is relatively easy to imagine reentering nature destructively on the one hand, or by shedding the accoutrements of civilization, on the other, or by simply leaving behind most of what makes us who we are when we step into the forest (*Ibid.*).

Not surprisingly, Jordan suggests that ecological restoration circumnavigates this "either, or" dilemma, and draws people into nature, engaging them intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

> Restoration meets this problem head-on. As a comprehensive process, it includes traditional nature-oriented activities such as hiking, birding, and botanizing, but also a wide range of other, more participatory activities, including hunting, fishing, gathering, and cultivating. All of these are integrated into an event that is constructive rather than consumptive.... Restoration engages a range of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional faculties.... (Jordan: 1994, 24).

Restoration captures a sense of history, the fourth element of Jordan's paradigm for a better relationship between nature and culture, by revisiting history while trying to reverse it" (Jordan: 1994, 25). Restoration, Jordan argues, "is an exploration of change and its implications," including "the cost of change...[and] the crucial distinction between change that is reversible and change that is not" (*Ibid.*).

It is during this discussion of history and change that Jordan first starts to discuss the formal role he sees for ritual in restoration, (although I would suggest that it is *implied* in point three, in the idea that restoration must engage every element in the gamut of human capabilities). Jordan suggests that as humans, we "know something of history and realize that our relationships with particular landscapes and with nature generally have undergone dramatic changes, especially during the last few thousand years" (Jordan: 1994, 24). We need, therefore,

> the modern equivalent of the world renewal rituals of archaic peoples, not merely to renew the earth in a literal sense (which, in fact, restoration does, offering a fascinating parallel to these classic rituals), but also to explore the past and have access to the experiences of nature that have shaped us as a species, as a culture, as a community, and as individuals (Jordan: 1994, 25).

Ritual therefore provides a forum through which to reenact, and thus hopefully come to understand, a sense of ourselves as ancient inhabitants of this world, not just modern and destructive guests of this age.

Jordan's fifth specification of a paradigm that will create better relations between people and the environment is that it should be flexible and capable of adaptation as needed. He argues that restoration achieves this by acting as a kind of an ongoing dialogue between humans and nature; "what is involved is a continual dialogue rather than a program, paralleling in our dealings with the biotic community the dialogue that sustains a democratic society and makes it adaptable to change" (Jordan: 1994, 27). He also assumes that the flexibility of the restoration-based paradigm will have universal application. Restoration will enable people to reenter nature "from the vantage point of any kind of culture" and develop "a new relationship in practical and and psychological terms," which will be able to withstand all the tumultuous and rapid changes of this era, and beyond (*Ibid.*).

Jordan's final requirement of this new cultural relationship with nature is that it must provide for a way to articulate and celebrate our relationship to, and membership in, nature. Jordan argues that restoration work does this, and that therefore it makes people happy. For example, he describes people enjoying the burning of sections of the prairie in the Upper Midwest each year precisely because it gives them a clear sense of nature's need of human activity, "we have a role here: we belong in this community, and so perhaps we belong on this planet after all" (Jordan: 1994, 28).

Jordan further suggests that one of the most effective ways of expressing and celebrating our relationship with nature is through ritual and performance. He even goes so far as to hint that the ecological crisis in North America is, at least in part, due to our puritanical shunning of ritual and performance. In other words, our failure to continually explore and express our relationship to nature through ritual has disassociated us *from* nature. Discussing this in relation to environmentalism's refusal to take ritual seriously, he says:

> Of course this is not peculiar to environmentalism but rather is characteristic of our entire society, with its reduced sense of the efficacy of ritual. Perhaps this is another "root" of the so-called environmental crisis that has developed in the West since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Surely the emergence of science, and later the technologies based on it, played a role by increasing the distance between nature and culture. Even as that gap widened, however, the Reformation mounted an explicit attack on symbolism and ritual, and largely did away with the ritual traditions that human beings had always depended on in

> their contact with nature. The result, it may be, was a worldview within which real union with nature is impossible (Jordan: 1994, 29).

Jordan stresses that when he talks about ritual in restoration, he does not just have "in mind...the addition of performative techniques such as music, poetry, and so on, *to* the process or restoration," rather he seeks, "a conception of restoration itself as both an effective process and an expressive act. The idea is not merely to *decorate* restoration, but to develop it to enhance its expressive power" (Jordan: 1994, 31).

After articulating what he thinks a new environmental paradigm should include, and indicating how ecological restoration meets those requirements, Jordan proposes three premises "as the basis for a new paradigm for the relationship between culture and nature":

> 1. Though ourselves the products of nature, and in this sense natural, we do differ in certain fundamental ways from the rest of nature, notably with respect to our level of self-awareness. Thus we may be citizens of the world, but we are not "plain citizens," and any attempt to overlook this is simply wallpapering over a major feature in the structure of the world, and is bound to have unfortunate consequences.
>
> 2. Although this tension cannot be resolved in purely literal terms, it can at least be dealt with in a psychologically effective way through performance and ritual. This, then, is one of the functions of ritual, and humans have used ritual techniques from time immemorial to mediate their relationship with nature.
>
> 3. The process of ecological restoration provides an ideal basis for the development of a modern system of rituals for negotiating our relationship with the rest of nature (Jordan: 1994, 30).

Ritual, therefore, is the cornerstone of Jordan's model of restoration. From the hopes Jordan articulates for the use of ritual in restoration, it is evident that Jordan sees multiple applications for it. These include, as described above, using ritual to connect restorationists with a sense of the history of their community and landscape, and as a means of exploring and celebrating human membership in nature. He has also advanced the idea, as discussed in Chapter Two, that ritual alone may be a powerful enough "technology" to *literally* transform restoration sites, and entire belief systems, effecting a sort of ecological transubstantiation. Through this almost magical process, ritual will turn environmentally degraded landscapes into healthy thriving ecosystems, and transform our collective social malaise, caused in part by our disassociation from nature, into happiness and security.

This idea of an almost magical conversion, in which *a* is transformed into *b* through ritual, is similar to some of the theories that have been advanced on this topic by Frederick Turner, a professor of comparative literature in Texas, and the son of anthropologist Victor Turner. As Jordan has indicated several times (Jordan: 1994, interview), Frederick Turner has had a large influence on his ideas about the promise of restoration. Turner has published extensively on the topic as well, with essays appearing in *Harper's*, *Restoration and Management Notes*, and in books such as *Beyond Preservation.* His own books, *Rebirth of value: Meditations on beauty, ecology, religion, and education*; *Natural classicism: Essays on literature and science*; and *Beauty: The value of values*, explore the connection between aesthetic beauty and ecological integrity, which he feels is of central importance to the development of restoration. Perhaps his best known work, however, is *Genesis: An epic poem*, about a renegade band of humans who attempt to terraform Mars. Baldwin *et al* describe the poem as "a visionary attempt to discern the future of the human relationship to nature" (Baldwin et al: 1994, 8).

One of the basic tenets of Turner's belief system is that much of human intellect and creativity is devoted to negotiating the species-wide shame we feel about certain aspects of our humanity. He suggests, for example, that creation myths, in which an essentially shameful act is ultimately transfigured into something life-affirming or beautiful (such as the creation of the seasons after Persephone's "shameful" rape by Hades) are an expression of our need to make sense out of shame.

> These [creation] myths express the essential knot of our human predicament. The threads of that knot include: the problematic coexistence of a reflective mind with a smelly, sexed, and partly autonomous body, the horror of death, the incestuous paradoxes of kinship and parenthood, the capacity to lie given to us by language, the difficulty, obligation, and anxiety inherent in the socio-economic acts of gift-giving and dividing the fruits of the hunt, and above all, perhaps, the ambiguous relationship of human beings with the rest of nature (Turner: 1992, 70).

Turner posits that cultures often act out their creation myths as world-renewal rituals, "which transform the "score" of the story into the performance of the rite" (*Ibid.*). Performing them presumably lets us act out our shame ritually, and thus transcend it.

Within Turner's theoretical approach, members of our North American culture feel an overwhelming sense of shame for the ecological damage our greed and consumption have caused. We therefore need to develop rituals to negotiate this shame, and to attempt to convert it into something beautiful. Further, we need to use ritual to acknowledge our "solidarity in crime with the rest of nature," to celebrate the fact that we are not the only living creatures who live by displacing other species, and by killing to survive (Turner: 1992, 74).

> ...our solidarity with all other living species is likewise based partly on the fact that we all have to corrupt and exploit the purity of the inorganic universe to survive at all, and we all exist because other challengers for our ecological niche were defeated (Turner: 1992, 73).

In other words, all of nature is guilty and ashamed, but humans must create rituals to come to terms with our shame because we are the world's most self-reflexive creatures.

Turner suggests that ecological restoration "may be the basis for a [new] world-renewal ritual which...will be effective in concrete as well as symbolic ways" (Turner: 1992, 70). The purging involved in the removal of exotic species, and the labour and expense of "earthkeeping", actual restoration work, may be regarded as sacrificial ritual, "a sacrifice leading to reconciliation" (Turner: 1992, 71). Besides reconciling us to our human natures, and to our place *within* nature, sacrificial rituals developed out of restoration will also help us to create and then recognize beauty in what we do:

> It is well to keep in mind, then, that sacrificial rituals accept, frame, organize, and elaborate the chaotic shame inherent in death, life-crisis, birth, sexual awakening, and pollution, and especially the human crime against nature, in such a way that we recognize the beauty that also attends those embarrassing moments of emergence and self-reference (*Ibid.*).

Beauty emerges then, out of the newly restored natural systems *and* out of our ability to acknowledge, and then transcend shame, particularly that which we feel as a result of ecological crisis.

The second major element of Turner's approach to restoration is that that the human propensity to redesign natural systems to suit ourselves is part of nature's, or God's, plan, and therefore intervention in ecological systems, be it restoration or all-out creation, is a "natural" activity. Drawing his ideas from chaos theory, Turner writes:

> "Chaotic" systems have the peculiar characteristics of unpredictability and self-organization, and seem to be drawn toward "strange attractors," outcomes whose graphic representation is immediately recognizable as beautiful. Chaotic attractors exhibit the characteristics of self-similarity (their patterns are repeated, often with variations, at an infinite variety of scales) and fractal discontinuity.... Such forms denote the feedback process - of which biological evolution is one - that created the universe as we know it. There is good reason to believe that those forms appear beautiful to us because we have inherited from our own evolution a capacity to recognize, and to participate in, the creative processes of nature (Turner: 1994, 53).

"Interventionist ecology" should therefore be considered an art, with our sense of aesthetics the guide to our reassembly of natural systems. Because "healthy and ecologically rich" landscapes embody "as living attractors, the forms that are generated by self-organizing feedback systems", we find them beautiful (*Ibid.*). Thus, "our innate aesthetic abilities are a reliable rule of thumb when we wish to judge the ecological viability of a natural landscape" (*Ibid.*). Our sense of beauty will tell us "what is relevant, what is likely, what is proper, [and] what is fruitful" (Turner: 1994, 54).

Turner, however, does not advocate that restorationists rely *only* on aesthetics or that they ignore scientific information and methods in their ecological intervention efforts. He suggests, rather, that we would be "in a desperate case" if we had to rely on science and logic alone (*Ibid.*). He warns that

> there is not enough time to work everything out in that [logical] fashion, and there is simply too much information, and too many possible consequences, to do so without those higher [aesthetic] integrative abilities (*Ibid.*).

Further, he appears to support the Elizabethan philosophy that we learn through doing, "and that the best and highest thing we can do is imitate the creative activity of nature" (Turner: 1994, 56). Turner therefore urges the blending of art and science, suggesting that "good science [will] come out of the artistic imitation of nature" (*Ibid.*).

If we are to consider interventionist ecology an art form, however, then upon what sort of artistic tradition should we seek to base it? Turner suggests that restorationists look to the whole human history of farming, gardening, and landscape architecture, pointing out that "...human beings have in fact been creating new ecosystems for thousands of years" (Turner: 1994, 56). First, we should examine "the arcadian tradition of the farmed *rus* or countryside...[which] is an ancient library of techniques by which humans can live harmoniously in a landscape they have partly created" (*Ibid.*). We should also look to the principal successor of the arcadian farm, the garden. Turner writes that the famous gardens of history, such as those in Babylon, Rome and the Renaissance, "are part of the aesthetic education of the creator of ecosystems; they are epitomes of the aesthetic landscape".

> If we can sensibly combine our new scientific knowledge of ecology and genetics with the old empirical wisdom of the peasants and farmers and gardeners, and the influence of our existing garden aesthetics, there is no reason why the Earth should not under human care end up with an even greater richness and variety of ecosystems than it now possesses (Turner: 1994, 57).

Further, it may even be part of human destiny to bring our creativity and sense of aesthetics to bear on natural systems *outside* of the Earth, ultimately resulting, for example, in something as extreme as the terraforming of Mars.

Turner's model of restoration-as-art-and-sacrificial-ritual is just one incarnation of what is actually a growing trend to merge the art and science of restoration. While the extremity of some of Turner's statements may be off-putting, such as his assumption that is human *destiny* to meddle about with nature, he is correct in asserting that humankind has a long tradition of creating art out of landscapes, and of exploring our relationship with nature through art. Max Oelschlaeger points out that as far back as the Paleolithic era, humans have used art to express perceptions "of natural relationships between human beings and their environment" (Oelschlaeger: 1991, 22). Different artistic traditions: Greek, Medieval, Renaissance, Romantic, Victorian, and so on, indicate the changing ways in which our ancestors conceived of and expressed their sense of membership in the natural world.

While making art about the relationship between nature and culture is an ancient activity, there has been a passionate and renewed interest in "environmental art" in the past several decades. Since the 1960s, artists have explored this topic through sculpture, painting, performance art, and so on, both in galleries and outside on the land itself. While an exhaustive account of this artwork would fill several volumes, it is worth describing one installation to get a sense of what this art *can* look like.

Theater of Memory is an installation created by Bill Viola in 1985, and exhibited in *Eye of Nature I*. Describing the piece, Daina Augaitis writes:

> ...the viewer enters a dark cave-like room - the non-verbal timelessness of the subconscious - and finds a large uprooted tree lying on its side, lit only by small electric lanterns flickering on the tree's branches. A wind chime tinkles in the darkness, its delicate sounds intermittently superseded by loud and abrupt electronic crackles of static, as if to shock the mind and jolt it out of stasis. Beyond the tree is a wall-sized video screen on which a stream of television "snow" is projected; degenerated images sporadically come into focus. The images seem out of phase and out of sync with the human receptors that read them. Our eyes search for recognition as these moments of television, art and history flutter on and off the screen, in and out of memory (Augaitis: 1991, 3).

Augaitis says that the piece "is a convergence of the natural landscape with the psychological one, where imagination and cultural memory join with the material of the environment" (Augaitis: 1991, 6). While the installation "is concerned with the investigation of life and being itself," it also questions culture's relationship with nature, "and the structures that determine its meaning" (*Ibid.*).

Considering the model of ecological restoration as art, we therefore see two antecedents, art created *on* nature, such as gardens, and art created *about* nature, such as the installation described above. While Turner's ideas seem firmly rooted in the former, the latter may bring a whole history of potentially useful styles and critical approaches to bear on restoration as well. Turner suggests we are "hard-wired" to desire and create beauty, and that our aesthetic sense can therefore serve as a guide as to what is ecologically healthy. But actual artists make choices about their art based on a whole variety of issues, of which aesthetics may only be one. Artists create their art within particular cultures, eras, and political realties. Applied to ecological restoration, this means that an artist's contribution to a restoration site might include elements which explicitly question the social and/or political realities that make restoration necessary at all. Artist's may also choose to use restoration sites to explore their personal and cultural relationship to the land, their cultural traditions of land use, their spirituality, and so forth. In fact, the lines between art, ritual and devotion may become blurred such as when artist's use their creations to honour and celebrate the land and their work on it, or when they perform the work, be it restoration or farming, *as* a ritual or a piece of art.

As indicated in Chapter Two, the Barbara Westfall's work is a useful example of how art, sustainable living, farming and spirituality can be fused in ecological restoration. Westfall does not distinguish between these elements, describing one thing she does as political, another as aesthetic, another as spiritual. Rather she simply tries to live well, growing what she can in her garden, and regularly honouring both the land and her labour on it. Art and ritual allow her make the land beautiful to herself and to others, give her a medium through which to indicate her respect for the land (such as her shrines to the cardinal directions), and lets her express her familial traditions, such as when she follows in the footsteps of her Prussian great-grandmother and buries a loaf of bread in the garden to "give back" to the land. Art and ritual also provide Westfall with the means through which to draw others into her aesthetic and political values. Through art, she can express her conviction that nature and culture are inseparable. She writes:

> My form of ecological restoration is through art, in particular earth renewal rituals and pathways. I use art to bring restoration to the grass-roots level. After all, any work with plants should begin at the roots. Art offers a way of sustaining one's kinship with nature. It is a pathway to recovering a personal relationship with all living things. Beyond the personal, it connects me to my community, and provides an opportunity to share in healing, teaching, and learning about the environment (Westfall: 1994, 148).

To Westfall, ecological restoration also provides a way to reanimate traditional land management techniques, such as those practiced by indigenous Americans or in some European folk traditions. She notes that in these traditions, people felt membership *in* nature, and their use of land, for example in food production, was essentially non-disruptive (Westfall: 1994, 150). Restoration work that perpetuates a nature/culture divide, and/or does not incorporate human sustenance into it, is therefore antithetical to Westfall. She supports instead a model of restoration that fosters a sense of human membership in nature in such overt ways such as including food production. The art and rituals that develop out of that model, such as burning dried plant material to give back to her garden, or holding a feast to celebrate the harvest, emerge naturally from the work itself. She writes that her

> vision of land healing involves a process of building on traditions in which human beings are not at the center, but part of a complex interconnected web of life. It is about fostering and establishing relationships, among all communities - plant, animal, mineral, insect, and human. It is a healing process that begins at home, integrated into sustainable practices, one that aims to restore not only an ecological balance - but a cultural balance as well (Westfall: 1994, 151).

Westfall therefore, is not attempting to use ritual to invoke macro-changes of culture and landscape. Rather, Westfall uses ritual to communicate her belief that nature is not separate from culture, and to honour both the land, and human membership in it.

As is evident from this only very brief account of some of the approaches to ritual in restoration, it is a field of growing interest. Much of what has been attempted so far, such as the rituals described in the first section of this chapter, or by Westfall's work, is essentially small-scale and community based. Other plans for ritual have been much more ambitious, such as, for example, Jordan's hopes to create a whole new paradigm of the nature/culture relationship based on the use of ritual in restoration. I would now like to consider the ideas expressed here in light of the contribution anthropology has made to the discussion about the use and power of ritual in culture, to see if restorationists claims about the possibilities of ritual can either be substantiated or refuted.

Ritual, Restoration, and Transformation

Bill Jordan states that the restoration work of Steve Packard in Chicago

> and others like him now points toward what I believe will prove to be most important about ecological restoration: its value not just as a process or a technology or a strategy for conserving bits and pieces of the natural landscape, but its significance as a performing art and as the basis for a new ritual tradition for mediating the relationship between nature and culture (Jordan: 1994, 29).

Within the practice of ecological restoration, some have regarded statements such as these skeptically, unconvinced that restoration can or should have anything to do with ritual, or overtly attempting to mediate or transform the relationship between nature and culture. Ritual, after all, has an uncertain role within North American/Western culture - we are suspicious of its occultish connotations. Further, while the call to change the way our culture views, and lives in, nature appear justified in the wake of environmental crisis, the manipulation of ritual to achieve that end is suspect. Questions impose themselves. Who gets to be creator and/or editor of these rituals? Who holds the power? If ritual can provoke change, is the use of it by a few to achieve particular ends just in democratic societies?

Responding to Jordan and Turner's essays in *Beyond Preservation...*, Gene Willeke writes that

> Restoration as ritual will not likely become an important element of the restoration process. Healthy relationships between human beings and the natural landscape can be developed in other ways more compatible with their worldviews and patterns of life (Willeke: 1994, 95).

He adds that while many people engaged in restoration work will find it "deeply satisfying...certainly not everyone who works on restoration must have the same aesthetic or spiritual experience" (Willeke: 1994, 95-96). Willeke expresses a concern that Jordan is attempting to elevate restoration work "to the status of a religion," a position Willeke finds "unappealing" (Willeke: 1994, 91). Historian Jack Kirby echoes Willeke's reservations, dryly commenting that

> the restoration ecologists aim to do nothing less than save neo-European's.

> souls. Salvation is accomplished by ritual, which reconnects human with nature. Weeding newly restored summer prairies with linoleum knives is reverential, but rather lonely. Autumnal community prairie burnings are more important and churchlike (Kirby: 1994, 238).

Kirby adds that while he has enjoyed participating in ritualistic restoration work such as burning prairies, he seriously doubts "if weeding or fire-tending will save [his] soul" (Kirby: 1994, 238-239). Further, he argues that he does not *need* ecological salvation, "I feel no need for such redemption, in fact, for I belong here, along with dandelions, bees, English sparrows, and countless other European invaders of long, long ago" (*Ibid.*).

Willeke and Kirby's comments are legitimate, and should not be dismissed as dour naysaying. People engaging in restoration work will arrive at a given site complete with religious, spiritual and aesthetic backgrounds. If that background is compatible with the creation of a new ritual tradition surrounding restoration, then all is well. But if people feel that their upbringing, or hard won beliefs are under assault, then the restoration process will be alienating and discomforting. They may feel that because they do not subscribe to the process or set of beliefs being enacted upon the land, then they have no role to play in the restoration of that site. Further, while advocates of ritual may have the best intentions in the world, ritual in restoration, taken to extremes, could turn into a coercive and negative process. In Chapter Two, for example, I noted how Bill Jordan claims that he does not want to force his beliefs onto anyone, but that by drawing them into rituals and restoration work, they may nevertheless be acted *upon* by the ritual, and experience some sort of conversion. I question whether that is a fair or principled thing to do, and whether he or any proponents of ritual will ever persuade a majority of restorationists of the appropriateness of this sort of unconscious or unsought conversion.

At the Society for Ecological Restoration conference in Lansing, Michigan this past summer, there was an incident that highlights this point. Barbara Westfall and Renee Miller, during a performance/discussion about the use of art in restoration education, passed out *kinick*, and stones they had collected from a nearby river. During the discussion following Westfall and Miller's presentation, some members of the audience commented, in no uncertain terms, that they resented being implicated in what they felt were ritualistic elements of the performance. One described the giving out of the stones as being akin to a time he was in Israel, when, while he was waiting at a bus station on the eve of the Sabbath, Orthodox Jews attempted to force him to wear a yarmulke. Faith, he commented, is personal, and if someone is going to proselytize, s/he should be prepared for hostile reactions.

I had enjoyed Westfall and Miller's performance, and was frustrated by what I perceived as some participant's unwillingness "to suspend disbelief," as one would at the theatre. After consideration and further discussion about this, however, I think that ritual, and even performance in this sort of context, in *not* like the theatre. Many people feel that overt forms of ritual have spiritual or religious connotations and that participation in ritual therefore implicates them in entire belief systems. If they do not share these belief systems, they may feel manipulated, or perhaps even blasphemous, depending on their personal religious affiliation.

Reconsidering some of the proposals about ritual in restoration in this light, we see, therefore, that any actual application of ritual is a tricky business. One may feel passionate in one's conviction about the usefulness of ritual, but one does not want to alienate people from restoration through the very acts that are supposed to draw them into it. Should the use of ritual in restoration therefore be abandoned, and the theories and work of restorationists like Jordan and Westfall relegated to the tiny sites of the few and the determined in rural Wisconsin?

My considerable reservations about the actual application of ritual in restoration notwithstanding, my research has led me to conclude that ritual could be very important to the practice. As discussed at length in Chapter Three, ritual activity has a role to play in any culture: in the creation of *specific* experience out of the general rush of *all* experience, as a medium to explore and resolve conflict, and as a spark to the imagination, a summons, as it were, to the creative and transformative muses dormant in culture. Our culture is in need of insight and change, and whether one calls it "crossing the postmodern divide," building a new "culture of nature" or creating "a new world order", *something* must be done. Baldwin *et al* write that

> The greatest incentive to continued research in restoration and further discussion of constructionist paradigm lies in the immensity of the consequences. Everything is at stake. The current ecological crisis has provoked a conscious search for new patterns of human relations with nature that has no parallel in the past, at least not since the invention of agriculture (Baldwin *et al*: 1994, 264-265).

The temptation to dismiss statements such as these as scaremongering should be resisted, for there is ample scientific and social evidence that human culture's separation from nature is having devastating results.

So given the ecological and social problems with which North American culture is grappling, what contribution can ritual (at least in anthropological terms) realistically make? First, let us return to Victor Turner's model of social drama, discussed in Chapter Three of this paper. In a social drama, there is an initial incident, or breach of social norms, which expands into crisis as members of the culture get drawn into the conflict and take sides. This state of crisis is undermines the authority and legitimacy of the power-holders of a culture, and perhaps the social structure itself, so it is in the interest of public leaders to resolve the conflict as quickly and efficiently as possible. The usual means of resolving conflict, what Turner calls the "redressive" stage is to refer the matter to courts or other judicial institutions, and to perform, if possible, some sort of ritual to reconcile the divided parties and celebrate the continuing social values shared by all. Ultimately, if these processes and rituals are successful, there is reconciliation, and cultural life returns to normal. Conversely, if the judicial process and attendant rituals are unsuccessful, there may be a recognition of permanent schism, perhaps involving the spatial separation of the feuding parties.

To determine how ritual may be useful to the practice of ecological restoration, I suggest that one consider Turner's model of social drama in the light of the present ecological crisis. His four element model is designed to be applied to the tumultuousness of social conflict, which in terms of cultural history, usually happens in the blink of an eye. But Turner's model could be applied to slower processes, and specifically, to the way that members of a culture conceive of, and interact with nature as well as each other.

Let us consider this. As discussed briefly in Chapter One, Western/North America's present relationship to nature has developed over centuries. Attitudes promoted or implicit in Judeo-Christianity, Modernism, Romanticism, colonialism, and more recently the environmental movement, have created in our culture a certain sense of what nature is, and what our relationship with it ought to be. This has developed, as it were, in slow time. At some point over the years, however, the idea that culture is separate from nature, and that humans are not authentic members *of* nature, became generally accepted. Some writers on this topic suggest that the real separation of nature and culture was a result of the Enlightenment, but perhaps it has simply been a product of trends in philosophy and science for hundreds of years, and which now have gathered force with the exponential pace of development in the twentieth century. Arguably, this sense of separation from nature has had an enormous impact on the way we make our living in the world, and the spiritual and physical connection we have with the natural environment. We can, therefore, think of this separation as a *breach* in our relationship with nature. It may have happened infinitely more slowly than a breach of social norms, but the results have been as catastrophic as the worst sort of social conflict.

Now, in the modern/postmodern era, we see numerous manifestations of environmental degradation in the lands, waters and air of our culture (and, in fact, wherever our culture has imposed its values): erosion, disappearing species, toxic rivers and oceans, drought, desertification, floods, global warming, and so on. The breach of our relationship with the natural environment has therefore led to ecological *crisis*. Further, it is possible that our alienation from nature has contributed to certain social problems: we are overly reliant on technology, and acquiescent to the patterns it imposes. We are distracted from authentic experience in this world by consumer goods and by dazzling artificial replacements that promise something better than the real thing. And tellingly, many of us feel shut out of public discourse, and face with sullen recognition our inability to effect change.

According to Turner's model, social crisis is threatening to culture because it undermines authority. Insofar as the public is *aware* of it, the ecological crisis is every bit as threatening to our leaders as social crisis. And, in fact, in the last several decades, political leaders have been called to account over environmental issues formally in elections, and informally, though the media, public meetings, and so on.

Turner's model suggests that breach and crisis call for redressive measures to repair the rent in the social, or to continue with our model, ecological fabric. In the public sphere, the last several years have shown an increase in what could be called redressive measures to cope with ecological crisis, with the courts and public "rituals" being used by the leaders to show the public that something is being done. The Canadian government, for example created (although recently quietly abandoned) the Green Plan, to prove to Canadians that the government was responding to public concerns about the environment. Environmental offenders are hauled before the courts by governments and NGOs, and either fined or stopped altogether. Public rituals such as Earth Day, and international conferences (such as the UN conference in Rio) are meant to assuage public concern, and persuade us that the crisis is being dealt with by adept and concerned leaders.

Current action on environmental matters by governments and corporations may be sincere, and motivated by genuine concern for ecological well-being. Conversely, however, we may be seeing a cynical attempt to hoodwink the public into believing that governments are doing more than they actually are. In either event, however, Turner's prediction that social leaders will use literal and symbolic measures to resolve crisis and ensure social stability is being realized various governments' handling of environmental issues.

But what of private and community means of redress? There are many paths to this such as planting community gardens, recycling waste, or changing consumptive habits, such as, for example, bicycling or walking instead of driving. Ecological restoration, however, and the use of ritual therein, may be one of the most potent means through which to resolve ecological/cultural crisis from "ground up." Governments may take symbolic or literal action on environmental issues because they have to for political survival, but individuals and communities are usually driven to do so for personal reasons, such as, for example, the safety of their drinking water. In this sense, ecological restoration is a *literal* redressive measure, equivalent to the courts or judiciary in the redressive stage of a social drama. Any rituals involved in the restoration will, therefore, as Turner suggests, help to order the restoration experience, and to cement the over-arching community or cultural values attached to the restoration work. These values could be love of land, love of place, humility, responsibility, and/or even the importance of human membership in nature.

In the social drama model, redressive action, including ritual, is necessary to resolve crisis. Arguably, then, if ecological restoration is to be successful as a means of resolving environmental, and potentially social, crisis, then ritual will be an integral part of it. A full, or even partial, resolution of environmental problems will ultimately be the result of many changes in the patterns of our cultural thinking, of course, but to reach that point we should use any means - literal or symbolic - to help us along.

A second concept of Victor Turner's that indicates that ritual and performance may be useful in ecological restoration is the idea of *liminality*. As discussed in

Chapter Three, liminality is usually expressed as the *liminal* or the *liminoid*, and is associated with tribal and industrial societies, respectively. The *liminal* is invoked through rituals such as rite of passage ceremonies, spiritual and/or religious events, as so forth. The *liminoid* is generated through art, leisure and recreation. Both states, however, are essentially anti-structure: the liminal *inverts* the existing social order, and the liminoid *subverts* and critiques it. In both liminal and the liminoid states, there is an enormous sense of creativity, as if all that a culture could be is revealed behind the normal, workaday world. Associated with the concept of liminality is *communitas*, in which, through the experience of liminal/liminoid phenomena, people feel connected to each other and all of humanity. *Communitas* is unpredictable, and can not necessarily be summoned at will, but when and where it does flash into existence, it points to the failings of the normative structure, and also provides a sense of what society could be. Liminal phenomena and communitas energize us, giving us the impetus to transform culture and bring our vision of a better reality into fruition.

It is possible that liminality, and perhaps communitas, may be generated in restoration through either through the formal incorporation of ritual practice, or a more informal application of art, performance, and/or recreation. The insight, inspiration, and creativity generated through the ritual/performance may further the restoration work in all sorts of ways. Participants may develop more creativity in their work, feel more connected to the task and each other, experience membership within the ecosystems they are restoring, and so forth. The liminality created by the ritual/ performance may transform participants *experience* of the restoration work, and thus the restoration work itself.

Through the creation of liminal, transformative states, ritual and performance may therefore help the practice of ecological restoration achieve its full social and ecological potential. If restorationists wish to change our cultural relationship with nature, then the transformative and energizing power of liminality and *communitas*, invoked by ritual and performance, may be important in actually realizing so significant a transformation. The ecological and social ills of this culture can be counted so vast, and so much a product of our alienation from nature and each other, that we should at attempt any reasonable means to generate creative solutions, and the energy to apply them.

It is also worth noting here that Bill Jordan is correct in stating that participants may not even need to believe in the efficacy of ritual to be affected by it. As Myerhoff points out, the experience of *flow*, the submersion of one's self in an activity to the extent that consciousness self-reflexivity is lost, may heighten the transformative power in the ritual experience, it is not, strictly speaking, necessary. The skeptical restorationist may bring all her critical faculties to bear on a restoration ritual or performance, analyzing the event from beginning to end, and still find herself affected by it. Ultimately, ritual appears to captivate our imaginations and generate some sort of transformative energy, whether or not we consciously experience liminal phenomena, *communitas*, or flow.

As also discussed in Chapter Three, however, there is no firm sense within anthropology that the transformative energy generated by ritual and performance is any guarantee of authentic, lasting change. In other words, the most moving restoration rituals in the world may fail to sustain the energy or insight they create, leaving the participants to return to the mundane world unchanged. The proponents of ritual in restoration will therefore have to be satisfied with the thought that while ritual cannot necessarily *make* change happen, it is a means through which to invite transformation, to express a certain willingness to change, and to symbolically explore what that change might be.

Anthropological theory thus supports the position that ecological restoration will be enhanced by the use of ritual, at least insofar as its transformative properties will be invoked. But, as discussed in Chapter Three, ritual also has normative qualities, and here we return to the thorny problem of coerciveness. As discussed above, some restorationists are bound to feel uncomfortable with the use of ritual in restoration, particularly if they feel the ritual has religious or overtly spiritual elements. They may be concerned that the restoration rituals will impose on, or be in opposition to, their already extant belief system, or they may merely feel uncomfortable participating in a performance genre that is unfamiliar to them. But even those most enthusiastic about ritual in restoration should be keenly aware of its possibly normative properties.

Ritual can be very persuasive. As Turner, Myerhoff, and Cohen suggest, the dramaturgical techniques of ritual, such as repetition, costuming, dancing, and so on, can work on the participants, effectively convincing them of the desirability of the ritual's apparent goal. Think of the spectacle and persuasiveness, for example, of the Nazis marching in polished uniforms through the streets of Berlin, or competing under Nazi flags at the 1936 Olympics. They made the spectators *feel* a certain way, and were therefore part and parcel of the whole cultural shift within Germany at the time.

I am not suggesting that restoration rituals will have anything near the terrible power of the Nazi rituals, into which a whole government's efforts were poured to make them effective and convincing. Nor am I suggesting that there is anything unsavoury in the goals of restorationists. I believe, however, that this element of ritual's power is deeply troubling. Unless practitioners are vigilant, restoration rituals may develop into something that enforce a particular approach to the practice, or perhaps support one "restoration authority." Andrew Light refers to the term "hegemony," to describe how authority can be created through "the political normalization of certain practices and restrictions (including the use of language) in certain ways" (Light: 1994, 142). He cites the way Americans think about nature as an example:

> all things being equal, in the United States the market is allowed to govern exchange of private property, and by and large thinking of nature primarily as a resource is considered acceptable. Laws may get formed around our consent to those practices but the practices themselves are not originally juridical in nature.

> We find it odd to think differently about these issues, and even if we can think of these issues differently we generally expect Americans to unconditionally accept these states of affairs (*Ibid.*).

Ritual has certainly been used in the creation of hegemony before, not only in our Nazi example above, but in some of our culture's most venerable institutions. Think, for example, of the university system. At most universities, the day to day functioning has certain ritualistic properties, such as the repetition with which we attend lectures, write papers, and sit exams. And certain occasions, such as graduation, are overtly ritualistic, including in their structure such devices as costuming, pageantry, singing, and so on. Together, these ritual qualities help reinforce the hegemony of the university system; most of us assume that it is only by participation in this sort of structure that we become "educated." And, even if students, professors, or university administrators resist this assumption, the "outside" world of government and business usually does not. If students wish to work for them, they must conform to the orthodox standards of higher education.[1]

It is therefore incumbent upon the advocates of ritual keep in mind the more troubling aspects of ritual, its normative and coercive properties, and its ability to reinforce hegemony. On one hand, it is a good thing if rituals change the way people feel, think, and possibly act. That is how we may be able to change our cultural beliefs about nature. On the other hand, however, incorporating ritual in restoration means thinking very carefully about how to develop rituals that will continue to be inclusive of all sorts of beliefs and approaches.

One possible way to reap some of the benefits of ritual in restoration while avoiding some of its more troubling aspects may be to refer back to Borgmann's concept of focal practices. Borgmann defines focal practices as activities that are mentally and physically engaging, and which exist in their own rich context.

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[1] This example is not intended as a criticism or "dig" at the university system in Canada or elsewhere. I chose it only for the clarity with which I feel it expresses an instance of hegemony, that is, a collective assumption that there is really only one way of doing something.

Ecological restoration itself, since it calls for one to be intellectually and physically engaged in the work, can be considered a focal practice. We can also, however, consider many of the things we have been calling "restoration rituals" as focal practices as well. For example, consider Holland's description of the North Branch Prairie Project workday circle. Holland considers the workday circle to be a "ritual" that orients the efforts of the day to come, and provides a means for the participants to express their care and concern about their work and one another. But we can also call it a focal practice; it meets all of Borgmann's criteria. The morning circle is a focal *thing*, existing in the context of the restoration work and the participants care and attention for the project and each other. By meeting every morning they work, they have developed the focal thing into a focal *practice* that enlivens and illuminates their work.

Consider also the visits to the cardinal shrines that Westfall makes most days, but always on the mornings before plantings, harvests or restoration work. The visits themselves are focal things, and she has developed them into a practice. The walk through the early-morning prairie, and her prayers and meditations, engage her with the land, and with the purpose of the day's work. She emerges from the morning practice centered, focussed, and prepared for the work ahead.

Looking back over many of the restoration rituals described in this chapter and in Chapter Two, one sees therefore, that they may as easily be called focal practices as rituals. I suggest that this is the model of activity - call it ritual or focal practice - that we should consider including in restoration. Its transformative properties, although they are in "slow time" as opposed to the "quick fix" hoped of by some for ritual, promise much. These practices call for creativity, and mental and physical engagement with each other, and with the work at hand. They will give us a means to explore and express our relationship with nature, and liven the restoration work itself. Their emphasis, however, will always be on their context, and thus they should grow out of each project, and from the traditions of the people working on it. We can borrow and lend to be sure, but the focus on individual context should preclude the practices developing into orthodloxy, or the imposition of one way of engaging with nature to the exclusion of others.

Chapter Five

Changes on the Land: Conclusion

In Chapter One, I stated that ecological restoration is quickly growing in scope and popularity, and thus it is important to decide collectively on a conception of the practice that defines not only what restoration *is*, but what it *could* be. Restorationists assume that since human interference in nature is inevitable, the best recourse is planned and caring intervention in natural systems to attempt to reverse, or to at least mitigate ecological damage. Some restorationists, however, also suggest that since environmental problems are largely the result of specific cultural attitudes towards nature, any practice that seeks to undo ecological damage must also address cultural factors.

Let us return briefly therefore to the social and ecological context of ecological restoration. What are the cultural patterns that our shaping our relationship with nature and each other? What are restoration theorists saying we might achieve if we develop the practice right? What does restoration promise?

The first and most obvious thing that restoration promises is the chance to reverse ecological damage. Some theorists, such as Eric Katz, identify a lingering ethical issue about whether or not is appropriate to intervene deliberately in nature at all (Katz: 1992). Others respond that "the evidence of planetary damage is so painfully apparent that the question of whether we should restore or not lies in the realm of abstraction" (Higgs: 1991, 98). While other ethical problems of restoration include such troublesome issues as mitigation - destroying certain ecosystems under the justification that one can create them anew elsewhere - generally it is hard to find much fault with a practice that seeks to undo environmental damage. Restoration, therefore, appropriately developed and practiced, means the application of human skill and creativity will be able to revitalize prairies, savannahs, wetlands, rivers, animal stocks, alpine regions, and so on.

A growing number of theorists and practitioners, however, have also advanced the idea that ecological restoration may be a powerful tool in terms of *cultural* restoration. While it may be romantic and naive in the extreme to suggest that one activity alone can prove a *panacea* for modern culture's ills, it is nevertheless possible that ecological restoration provides a sufficiently captivating way of interaction between human and natural communities that it stands as a model for real social, as well as ecological, change.

Looking back over the context of ecological restoration identified in Chapter One, one can speculate about what socio-cultural changes restoration could bring. For example, considering the conditions of hyperactivity and sullenness so prevalent in our culture, how might restoration offer an antidote? Despite a growing technological sophistication to restoration work, much of it seems antithetical to hyperactivity. One must follow the seasons, collecting seeds, planting, burning, and so on, at the appropriate time of the year.[1] In addition, one's restoration work is constrained by the hours of daylight, and the weather over a given week. Restoration is often slow work, and while back-hoes and bulldozers may have important roles to play, much of the work is delicate and must be done by hand.

Further, restoration work is essentially an optimistic and engaged response. While progress at a given restoration site may often appear slow and incremental, it nevertheless gives one the sense of doing *something*, of participating in change for the better. Restoration liberates us from the "general sense of despair at our inability to creatively remedy environmental problems..." (Baldwin *et al*: 1994, 4). Higgs comments that "the very effort required, the quantity of engaging work to be done, is our key to escape from the sullenness characteristic of consumer society" (Higgs: 1991, 102).

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[1] A rather heartbreaking example of what happens when one doesn't perform restoration work at the correct time of year took place at the SER conference in Irvine, California in the summer of 1993. A score of conference participants spent a day planting seedlings in a scrubby lot next to a housing development in the suburbs - the thought that we were bringing something beautiful back to that rather bleak landscape was a happy one. After a hot afternoon in the sun, however, when the sprinklers had been turned on to water the young plants and everyone had cheered, we were informed that the plants would all likely die as we had been conducting a mere exercise, and it was actually the wrong time of year to plant. The effect was very demoralizing, and we returned back to the conference centre (the Hyatt Regency) much more subdued that we'd set out.

Ecological restoration may also provide a forum through which to explore and even navigate the "pervasiveness of artificiality" in North American culture (*Ibid.*, 97). The act of restoring, or effectively recreating, ecosystems in whole or in part, forces us to consider what is real. What do we count as authentic? Is nature less real, less itself, by virtue of active human intervention? What does the difference between real and artificial mean to us? Further, environmental restoration work forces us to exist, for a time, in the *background* of our fast-paced, commodity-based, culture. If the foreground is filled with devices and artifacts, both real and artificial, and the background is the environmental damage sustained to produce the foreground, then time spent restoring the background will assist us in seeing the real costs of the life we lead. This may sound esoteric in the extreme, but consider the application. If one is participating in a project to clean-up and restore a patch of prairie or ocean on which there has been an oil leak, then one is brought into first hand contact with the reality of oil consumption in our culture, a reality that is usually removed from us in the foreground. We see beautiful cars and sophisticated advertisements for (of all things) "Mother Nature's gas station," but not the grimness of oil and gas exploration, refinement, and transportation.[2]

Ecological restoration may also, depending upon its application, offer a method of resistance to the patterns into which the pervasiveness of technology tends to shuffle us. As mentioned above, our lives are not only "filled with machines", but also are "conditioned by the operation of technology" (Higgs: 1991, 99). Practically, this means that

> technology tends to promote centralization and expansion of social and political

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[2] This refers to a recent advertising campaign by the Canadian company Mohawk Gas. We won't even get into the cultural appropriation suggested by the name of the company.

> institutions, imposition of hierarchical orders, the marginalization of traditional skills and crafts and the overt manipulation of reverse adaptation - [in] other words, the adjustment of ends to match the character of available means (*Ibid.*).

Restoration, depending on the ends that are identified as appropriate (both for the practice and specific projects), can resist this. For example, restorationists may decide that their project must operate as a democratic collective, thereby avoiding the tendency in our culture to arrange things hierarchically. Further, people involved in specific restoration projects may decide to seek out other bodies of knowledge about the site being restored, and incorporate indigenous and/or local knowledge in addition to western scientific practices.[3] Restoration projects may also be timely opportunities to engage in what Ursula Franklin calls *holistic* and *growth* models of labour in which individuals have a sense of input and control over what they do, and in which there is as much emphasis on *process* as *product*. Ecological restoration alone, of course, cannot overthrow the conditioning of our technological age, but it may provide one model or approach by which to avoid it.

Ecological restoration also promises to be a significant means through which individuals can find vital engagement with nature. While many activities, such as hunting, backpacking, photography, and so on, may take one into the outdoors, these, in the case of hunting, for example, are essentially consumptive. Even if one manages to create an "environmentally friendly", non-consumptive experience in the outdoors, the ethic of "take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints" tends to reinforce our separation from our environment. Restoration, on the other hand, places us squarely in the ecosystems we are restoring. Westfall writes that "ecological restoration offers many things - but for me it is primarily one way of sustaining my kinship with nature" (Westfall: SER conference paper, 1993). It can also broaden that sense that of connection and offer "a way to connect with family and community - an opportunity to share in a healing, teaching and learning process which is reciprocal" (*Ibid.*).

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[3] By using scientific in this context I do not mean to infer that traditional and/or local knowledge is *less* scientific.

Ecological restoration, therefore, may be at least a partial antidote to the modern/ postmodern characteristics of sullenness and hyperactivity, a means of negotiating between the real and the artificial and the foreground and the background of technology, and a method or reengaging individuals and communities with landscape. Through its potential to reconfigure our personal and cultural relationship with the natural world, ecological restoration may, in fact, provide us with the means to self-consciously recreate our cultural beliefs about nature, breaking down the polarity that exists between nature and culture in North America, and developing a way of knowing the world that gives humans engaged membership in nature. Eric Higgs writes:

> As we make our transition to an ecological society, dissolving as we go the technological character that has given rise to so many urgent problems, we might begin to think also of dissolving the traditional categories of culture and nature. The precise moment when we conceive ourselves as being capable of transcending reciprocity to become fully integrated with nature will mark our successful arrival (Higgs: 1991, 103).

Within ecological restoration, a dialogue on this has already been started, and has been carried out at recent SER conferences, in the journals *Restoration and Management Notes* and *Restoration Ecology*, as well as in books and articles published elsewhere.

If restoration is to fulfill all the promise that has been associated with it, however, we must ask if it is enough to be careful with the practice, and trust that the social and cultural change will come, or if concerned restorationists need to be more self-conscious about the pursuit of their goals. In other words, do they have to develop restoration practices that articulate their cultural, as well as ecological, hopes for given projects?

Some practitioners and theorists, such as William Jordan III, Frederick Turner, and Barbara Westfall argue yes, and suggest that ritual and performance are the means by which to make ecological restoration a potent force for social, as well as ecological change. Claims for the potential of ritual in restoration have varied from the extreme, such as Jordan's belief that it may be possible to create an ecological equivalent of communion and the transubstantiation that will be the key to a whole new paradigm for the relationship between nature and culture, to the modest, such as Westfall's conviction that "giving back" to the land, either through restoration or placing a loaf of bread in the garden, fosters humbleness and respect for the land.

I believe that ritual does have a promising, and potentially very important, role to play in the future of ecological restoration. Ritual activity, however, has inherent in it certain deeply troubling properties, such as its potential coerciveness and its normative qualities. Any application of ritual to restoration, therefore, should be carefully considered. Restoration, as an ecological and cultural practice, has the potential to address many of the social conditions described above, and to serve as a means to help our culture reconsider and renegotiate its relationship with nature. Restorationists, in order to ensure the practice lives up to its social and ecological potential, should seek the positive benefits of ritual: its tendency to spark creativity and invite change, thus illuminating solutions and showing all sorts of cultural/ecological possibilities, its ability to connect people and things through the experience of *communitas*, and its usefulness as a symbolic means to resolve disruption and conflict. Restorationists must also, however, resist the negative aspects of ritual, including any creation of a sense of restoration orthodoxy or hegemony, or the imposition of rituals upon those who are unwilling to participate.

How then, are we to develop rituals that favour creativity over orthodoxy, and transformation over coerciveness? Looking back to Chapter Three, I believe that the key to the development of good rituals is to look to the goals of the participants, and the context in which the rituals are to be set. For example, one should view Jordan's ambition to create nothing less than a restoration liturgy with profound reservation. Reading his work, it is impossible to doubt his motives - he appears to have the best of intentions - but what would the consequences of such rituals be? First and foremost, many would turn away from rituals of that nature, and if they were mandatory in restoration, perhaps even from the practice itself. As Willeke and Kirby suggest, many people do not want or need their souls saved, especially not by ecological restoration. Some of Turner's theories, such as his desire to design the equivalent of creation myths to transform our cultural "shame" into "beauty" are similarly off-putting. Many of us feel no "shame" for our humanness, or our relationship with nature, and consider that *l'etat du monde* calls instead for optimism and vigorous action. Personally, I am actually offended by Turner's admonition to be ashamed of myself; I view it as the imposition of a world view that has nothing to do with my system of beliefs, and further, one which has been part of oppression - particularly against women - for thousands of years. Restoration rituals that involve buying wholesale into a new belief system and/or into a new religion, will therefore likely exclude far more people than they include. There will thus be no mass conversion; our cultural beliefs about nature will not be swept away and replaced by new and better ones. Too many people will want to stay at home and avoid restoration work altogether if it involves liturgy, religion and/or the acceptance of tenets or beliefs that are foreign to them.

Yet another problem with Jordan and Turner's hope for the development of a restoration liturgy is that a fixed form of restoration ritual would promote exactly the sort of orthodoxy that I think is most dangerous about ritual. They assume that we need to establish traditions and rituals that will have universal application; in their view there will be one way to engage in ritual, and thus one way to restore. But what is the logical extension of this? Restoration "priests" that travel from project to project, performing rituals? Will we have seminaries that train this restoration clergy? While no one has of yet seriously proposed anything this extreme, that this idea will develop is nevertheless a real possibility. At recent SER conferences, for example, there have been comments that the proposed "Earthkeeping Academy" should train people how to conduct restoration rituals, so that they may travel about, performing them at different sites. Jordan's comment that ritual is a useful and "portable" technology for effecting change conveys a similar idea. I suggest that the orthodoxy inherent in the notion of one, or even several, "proper" restoration rituals is antithetical to the use of ritual as a means to spark creativity and invite change.

The goals expressed by the advocates of ritual in restoration therefore give us a sense of the potential difficulties lurking beneath the glowing promises of cultural and ecological transformation. How they handle the context of restoration rituals is another signal of trouble. If there is a restoration liturgy that calls for the imposition of given rituals at every project, in every culture, on every landscape, then there is something terribly wrong. There are no universals here: cultures and landscapes are too diverse.

Rituals, celebrations and performances that take into consideration the specific context of the restoration project, and that therefore develop out of the specific history of the land, traditions of the participants, and the restoration work itself will be, on the other hand, a boon to the practice. They will, by definition, be inclusive of their participants traditions, and look to the particular goals of the group doing the restoration work. Croll and Parkin write that since we move in landscapes that are socially and culturally constructed, we must recognize "cultural diversity" (Croll & Parkin: 1992, 8). Applied to restoration, this means that any use of ritual within the practice should recognize that diversity, and not covertly seek to impose one construction of nature, or ecological world-view. There is a social justice, or at least social equity, issue raised by this point, for the right to perform the rituals one chooses is often a political issue. History is replete with stories of people conducting their rituals in secret to avoid persecution: Christians taking communion in the catacombs of Rome, Jews celebrating the Sabbath in hiding from the Nazis, pagan women celebrating the solstice furtively to avoid Christian fanatics. While ritual traditions have often meant so much to their participants that is was worth performing them at any cost, advocates for new ritual traditions should be sensitive to this history.

Restoration rituals must therefore be tolerant and inclusive. If they are, they hold great promise for the practice, for several reasons. First, one can think of rituals and performance as one among many ways of connecting to the work and getting it done. Ecological restoration obviously calls for the knowledge and the methods of western science, but the practice only stands to be enriched by other approaches and traditions. Further, ritual, performance, and art may be ways "in" to restoration for people who feel that other approaches suit them more than science. For example, while most restorationists may feel most comfortable in the western scientific framework, others may view landscape as a canvass, or need to feel personally and spiritually connected to the work to muster the conviction to carry on with it day after day.

Restoration is a new and growing practice, and therefore should be tolerant of what counts as restoration *as long as the work gets done well.* Eric Higgs, for example, suggests that we

> consider a continuum that includes a variety of restoration projects. At one extreme are the highly regulated, policy-bound, scientifically precise efforts to replicate an ecosystem.... At the other end would be the wildly creative projects, the ones that embody a full, participatory involvement of the practitioner with the created system, the primary object being aesthetic expression. The degree, or kinds of creativity may differ across this continuum, but all these projects embody some degree of creativity reflected in the countless small decisions required to bring an ecosystem back to health (Higgs: 1991, 103).

Gene Willeke supports this statement, arguing that

> The complexity of ecosystems is such that artistic talent and insight are, for the foreseeable future, among the promising avenues for restoration, *particularly when the insights and data of science can be married to this aesthetic sense* (my emphasis) (Willeke: 1994, 95).

In other words, as Jordan advocates, the best way to understand and restore ecosystems is to engage "the full array" of human activities and abilities (Jordan: 1994, 18).

A second reason that ritual and performance hold promise for ecological restoration is that, according to anthropological theory, ritual has a tremendous ability to spark creativity and change, even to incite people to a certain course of action. Two possible models exist for the realization of this sort of transformative power. The first lies with the traditional sense of ritual as a sort of culturally official means through which to conjure liminality, and thus all the inherent potential in a culture. Through this we may feel more connected to the restoration work itself, to the landscape, and to each other. We will be energized, and we may even see a new way to establish a new relationship with nature that will enable us to break out of old and destructive habits.

The second model of effecting transformation, although more modest, may be more promising yet. This is the idea of establishing rituals/focal practices that will let us seek transformation, not in glorious flashes of insight, but through, literally, practice. Through repeatedly engaging in actions that tie us to the restoration work, or to land, or that lead us to reconsider our relationship with nature, we may find more meaning in what we do, and even eventually change how we think and act. I mentioned the North Branch Prairie Projects' workday circle in the previous chapter as an example of a group that, through their morning meetings, have developed a ritual/focal practice "that capture[s] the essence of the day, making it memorable and meaningful both to newcomers and to veteran volunteers" (Holland: 1994, 122).

Further, developing ecological restoration itself, as well as the activities that surround it, as a focal practice will lead hopefully lead us to value the *process* of restoration, as much as the *product*. In other words, by focussing on the process, that is the context, the work itself, we will be drawn into it. That immediate engagement with the work and, by extension, with nature itself, will paradoxically be one of our best bets to reach our larger goals of ecological and cultural transformation.

Finally, in conclusion, I would like to return to the topic of the goals of restoration, and particularly the use of ritual therein. I have suggested that despite certain of its deeply troubling aspects, ritual has a valuable part to play in restoration because it will allow practitioners a better chance of realizing part of the greater potential of restoration: lasting ecological and social change. I have also said, however, that we must pay close attention to the *specific* goals of the ritual-in-restoration advocates, and that we should resist them if they are preparing to reinvent religion, or create orthodoxy. I would add now that we also need to be careful of *any* arrogant assumptions about what ritual and restoration might achieve. It is very tempting indeed to tell ourselves that through science, or ritual, or some combination of the above, we have found *the* way to remedy environmental problems.

We should be mindful of the size of the task at hand, and aware of the human tendency to assume we can master any problem. Higgs writes:

> ...we must demonstrate considerable caution. By elevating creativity we should not presume that human arrogance should run free. The reciprocity between human and ecosystem so vital to successful restoration demands humility, and at times this humility must extend to what Bill Jordan terms "self-abnegation (*Ibid.*).

Wes Jackson supports this notion of humility and, referring to God's instructions to Moses to build "an altar of unhewn stone," suggests:

> This scripture must mean that we are to be more mindful of the creation, more mindful of theoriginal materials of the universe than of the artist. The altar was to stand as a reminder that we could not improve on the timeless purpose of the original material. I don't think such a scripture means that we are *never* to shape the earth with our art or our science, but that the scientist and the artist must remain subordinate to the larger Creation. The chances of disrupting nature's patterns, upon which we are dependent, are greatly reduced if we adopt this modest posture (Jackson: 1987, 9).

Higgs and Jackson's comments are useful reminders of the human propensity for arrogance and presumptuousness, both of which have played no small part in the creation of the ecological crisis in the first place. They also stand as a valuable counterpoint to the enthusiastic and boastful claims of Turner, that it is our destiny, God's plan, in fact, to reshape the world.

I refer, as a welcome alternative Turner's ambitions, to Alexander Wilson's more modest goal for ecological restoration:

> We must build landscapes that heal, connect and empower, that make intelligible our relations with each other and the natural world: places that welcome and enclose, whose breaks and edges are never without meaning. Nature parks cannot do this work. We urgently need people living on the land, caring for it, working out an idea of nature that includes human culture and

> human livelihood. All of that calls for a new culture of nature, and it cannot come soon enough (Wilson: 1991, 17).

Ritual and performance are one part of achieving Wilson's goals. They can be used to define and articulate our "relations with each other and that natural world." They can be used to create and bestow cultural meaning on the landscape. They can be part of how people live on the land, making homes and producing food. Ritual and focal practices may even provide the energy and transformative power that will effect actual change.

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